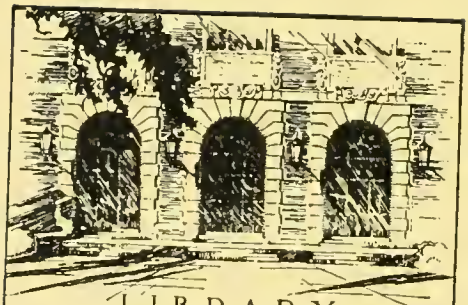

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THE SEA ROBBER.

CHAPTER III.

Nine weeks had passed, since the scenes described in our last chapter. But nevertheless, most important events had occurred, influencing the fate of many, and causing even the young King of Naples to tremble on his throne.

Garibaldi and his gallant volunteers had effected a landing on the shores of Sicily, and all Europe looked on, and hazarded conjec-

tures respecting his daring exploits. Would it be successful, or would he and his gallant band be totally annihilated? Who amongst the millions could have prophecied the result? But our tale has little to do with the gallant General and his brave comrades, only as they affected the fortunes of our *dramatis personæ.*

The gardens of the Gonzalo mansion rise in a gentle ascent from the shores of the bay, and from every part of the grounds the most picturesque and magnificent views are obtainable; the charmed eye scarcely knows where to rest, where all is so very lovely. The bright sparkling waters of the bay are generally scattered over with nearly a hundred variously rigged crafts of those seas. Nearer the shore numerous fishing boats painted in the gay colours the crews so

delight in, their white awning and long pole nets, altogether giving them a most picturesque effect. As the sun declines the men's voices mingle in their favourite barcaroles, and in the evening come over the clear waters in singular harmony and distinctness. One might imagine that life in that sunny clime, with its bright blue skies and its fertile soil, repaying the little toil spent on it fifty-fold, would be most happy. But the restless thousands that filled the apparently gay city of Naples and its vicinity were at heart far from happy, for they were living under the yoke of a bigot and a despot.

Two young ladies were walking in the gardens of the Gonzalo Palace on a lovely May morning. The youngest placed her arm round the neck of the elder, in a fond and loving manner; and as they walked beside

a beautiful myrtle and arbutus hedge,forming the boundary between the Gonzalo domain and the grounds of the Signor Manzani, it was scarcely possible to look upon a fairer or more lovely maiden than Marina Gonzalo; about the middle height, and much fairer than the generality of the Neapolitan beauties; auburn hair, in rich profusion; and the softest, clearest, and deepest blue eyes imaginable.

Although her features were admirable, it was the expression that gave her that peculiar fascination.

The elder sister, Bianca, was somewhat taller, and more fully formed, with a noble forehead, dark eyes and hair; but with a serious, thoughtful expression of countenance.

The sisters were earnestly conversing

"This is glorious news, Marina," said

Bianca, her face beaming with enthusiasm: "Garibaldi in Sicily; will soon be in Napoli, and then—"

"Ah! then," interrupted Marina, "then comes the difficulty. How can you imagine, with his handful of brave men, he can make head against the army of the King, to say nothing of the large fleet, watching his every movement?"

"The Bourbon fleet, my dear sister, is already half inclined to haul down the Bourbon flag, and substitute that of Garibaldi. Did not Trepani tell you that there is not a man on board the 'Etna' who would not shout 'Garibaldi and liberty?'"

"Yes," said Marina; "but Claudio will always be true to his king."

"If the king be true to him," returned Bianca. "But it is not in the nature of the

Bourbon to be true to any one; Trepani even now is falsely suspected, he says, of disloyalty."

"Then they wrong him!" exclaimed Marina, indignantly. "I myself detest the tyranny under which we live; but till the king betrays his subjects, I would remain true to my oaths."

A slight noise or crackling of the branches on the other side of the hedge caused the sisters to pause in their conversation.

"Look over the hedge, Marina," cried Bianca; "we have been rather incautious in conversing on such subjects near such a neighbour. Mount yonder steps, and look over."

Marina ran up the embankment, from which she could see over the hedge and into the shrubbery on the other side. As she gained

the top of the terrace, and looked over into the Signor Manzani's grounds,she perceived a tall man, in a wood-cutter's dress, walking slowly from the hedge; he had his back to her, and carried his bill-hook in his hand, with which he appeared to lop off, here and there, any protruding branches he perceived in his way. Marina gazed keenly at the peasant, hoping he might turn, but he did not, and presently she lost sight of him. Then she joined her sister.

"Did you see any one?" questioned Bianca.

"Only a tall man, in peasant's attire, clipping branches; but there was something in his walk, and the carriage of his head rather different from the usual manner of a country wood-chopper. I have seen the Signor Man-

zani and his son often near our hedge, which, pretty as it is, I would willingly have replaced by a high stone wall."

"There is something very strange about Giorgio Manzani," observed Bianca, thoughtfully; "his mode of life is mysterious. Our father wrote to his old friend Carlino in Paris —he, you know, frequents the best society in that gay metropolis—and asked him did he ever hear any talk of the Signor Giorgio in Paris, as he professed to pass most of his time in that dissipated city; and with his wealth and his love of pleasure he must be rather a noted character there. But the Signor Carlino wrote back word that he had neither met nor heard of the Signor Manzani, and he had purposely inquired."

"Well, it's very curious," said Marina,

"and I think it's also very strange how so much wealth could be amassed by selling old ropes and those kinds of things."

"Oh! immense fortunes are made in trade, Marina," returned Bianca. "It is only lately that the great wealth of the Manzani has become known. It is said he offered an immense sum for the island of Benedetto, near the coast of Sicily, which once belonged to Claudio Trepani's grandfather, who built a beautiful villa on it. It was taken by the crown as a right. However, our father says the island, as far as any actual value goes, is not worth a quarter of the sum offered; but the title of Count de Benedetto belongs to whoever owns the island, and therefore the Signor Manzani wishes to purchase it."

The sisters passed on through the grounds,

sometimes conversing, at times gazing delightedly over the fair scene before them, and watching the long column of smoke that rose from the crater of Mount Vesuvius, which every day for the last fortnight had thrown out vast volumes of cinders and red-hot pieces of stone, causing considerable alarm to the inhabitants located in its vicinity.

Little did the sisters imagine, as they walked along the path beside the hedge dividing their father's grounds from those of the Signor Manzani, that they were cautiously watched, and every word they uttered eagerly listened to by the man in the wood-cutter's dress, till, accidentally treading on a rotten branch, he startled the sisters. He saw Marina run up the terrace, and he knew he

was watched, so he walked from the hedge slowly through the shrubbery. He did not look back, because, for though his wood-cutter's garments disguised his person, his features would at once have been recognised. Proceeding through the shrubbery, the stranger came into the ornamental grounds of the mansion, and entering a pavilion, he unlocked the door of a private room, and at once changed his garments, and threw the wood-cutter's dress into a chest.

Giorgio Manzani paced the chamber, evidently in deep thought, and said, half-aloud, as if communing with his own thoughts—

"That Gonzalo is a well-wisher, and secretly a supporter of Garibaldi's projects, I am well aware. I could destroy him to-morrow, throw him into a dungeon, put him to the torture—nothing easier; but will that further

my plans? Marina Gonzalo shall be my wife, let things turn out as they may."

With these words uttered aloud, he passed from the pavilion, and walked towards the house.

CHAPTER IV.

About a month after the landing of General Garibaldi and his handful of volunteers on the island of Sicily, the Court of Naples began to feel excited, and, indeed, a little alarmed at the aspect of affairs. At first the landing of so small a body of men only created derision amongst the nobles and courtiers who crowded round the person of the king. With a powerful well-appointed army, they laughed at the idea of a party of wild, un-

disciplined adventurers conquering the soldiers of Ferdinand, and winning the finest island in the Mediterranean Sea; but every day brought startling intelligence from the island.

One evening, a handsome screw Neapolitan gun brig entered the bay of Naples, and just as the short twilight of the south merged into the shades of night, anchored off the mole.

The quay and all the approaches to it were crowded with an eager and curious populace.

"That's the 'Etna' gun brig," shouted several voices on the extremity of the mole; "she brings news from Palermo. We shall hear whether glorious Garibaldi and his gallant comrades are driven into the sea or not."

"Have a care!" said a cautious voice in a

low tone, "there may be spies about us, and Garibaldi is not here yet."

"Ah! there comes a boat from the brig; she is blowing off her steam. There's an officer in the boat coming on shore."

In the dim light, the boat was seen pulling for the landing steps on the side of the mole, and the chief persons amongst the crowd crushed towards the place. The gig was soon along side the stairs, and just previous to that the range of gas lamps on the mole were lighted, and everybody could be distinctly seen. A very young man landed from the gig. He was the commander of the "Etna," Lieutenant, or as he was styled in courtesy, Captain Claudio Trepani. Jumping lightly ashore, he ascended the stairs, whilst the gig pulled back to the gun brig.

"The news, the news, Signor Capitano!" shouted several voices. "Is Garibaldi near Palermo, or is he driven into the sea?"

"Long live Garibaldi!" shouted a voice, in the midst of the mob.

Immediately there was a rush of a dozen armed sbirri, to secure the traitor, and blows and curses became the order of the night; smash went some of the lamps, and a scene of considerable coufusion ensued.

Claudio Trepani quietly urged his way through the throng, heeding neither the mob nor the sbirri, till he reached one of the well lighted and then densely crowded streets. It is at night that a stranger can judge of the life the Neapolitan leads. Every house and mansion appeared as if emptied of its inhabitants, all enjoying the beauty of the

night and various festivities—the crowded streets—booths, players, buffoons, &c., that occupied the sight of thousands.

Claudio Trepani continued his way, heedless of all—immersed in thought.

He passed on till he reached the Royal Palace. Being provided with the countersign, he passed through the body guards, sentinels, and domestics, and hastening towards the private apartments of the King's minister, the Count de ———, just as he entered a long corridor, in the private part of the royal palace, an usher stepped up to him, saying, in a low voice,

"Captain Trepani?"

Our hero said,

"Yes, Signor."

"Then, follow me."

He led on through the corridor, and tap-

ping at a certain door, a lady-in-waiting, masked, threw it open.

The usher whispered our hero's name, and then the lady said,

"Follow me; but do not speak till spoken to."

Leading through the chambers—sumptously furnished, they entered another, still richer in decoration. At that instant the chamber was empty; but the next moment a lady, masked, entered from another chamber.

Claudio Trepani could not mistake that splendid figure—majestic and commanding, though masked; he knew he was standing in the presence of the Queen of Naples.

"Signor Trepani, I see, you recognise me. I sent for you to give warning. You are taking despatches to the Count de ———, the King's Minister. You are accused of

treason. I have reason to think the accusation is false; and I love the race you sprung from; therefore, be cautious how you reply to the Count de ———'s questions, for he loves not the Trepani."

The Queen of Naples said, removing the mask from her beautiful features.

"Be true and loyal to your King, and do not let the noble name of Trepani be branded as a traitor."

"Your majesty!" returned our hero, in a low but impressive voice. "My arm and my life are my King's. I am aware I am most unjustly suspected by his majesty's Prime Minister; but unless my royal master deserts me, I am his till death."

The Queen, for an instant, let her dark and brilliant eyes rest upon the features of Claudio Trepani, and then, holding out her

hand, and a most fair and lovely hand it was, said,

"I believe you—be true and loyal, and depend on it, the King will be your friend. Now, farewell, and be cautious what you say to-night."

Captain Trepani knelt, and kissed the hand held out to him. The Queen then passed into the adjoining chamber, and Claudio Trepani remained alone. Our hero, in a very thoughtful mood, returned to the door where the usher had left him.

At this time, Claudio Trepani had not the remotest idea of deserting the service of the Bourbons, though he had felt acutely several slights put upon him by the minister, and the suspicions entertained of his loyalty even by members of the royal family, who envied him the interest he excited in the King,

whose companion he had been for several years; he resolved he would never desert the King's cause, let things turn out as they might, as long as the King himself believed his loyalty, and did not lend his sanction to the minister's accusations. He certainly detested the existing government, but he felt satisfied that if the young King could by any means free himself from the evil counsellors surrounding him, he would act with discretion and justice towards his subjects, and in this he would be aided by his young Queen, a noble spirited and a most beautiful and highly accomplished woman. But it was the monarch's curse to be surrounded by those who had swayed the actions, and aided, abetted, and encouraged the cruel and tyrannical acts of his deceased father.

Trepani was somewhat troubled, for he knew

that the officers and crew of his own ship were more or less shaken in their allegiance to the King. Marina's brother, a lieutenant in the "Etna," and to whom he was exceedingly attached, could scarcely be restrained from openly expressing his hatred and contempt of the King's ministers and advisers. His father, the Count Gonzalo, was a marked man, and much of his property had already been confiscated. Trepani owed his unpopularity with the King and his ministers to his attachment to the Gonzalo family.

But for the still remaining affection of the King for his early companion, Captain Trepani would have fallen a victim to the minister's accusations. Our hero was roused from his reflections by the return of the chamberlain, who requested him to follow him. Conducting him through several richly

furnished and decorated apartments, he threw open a door. Trepani entering, perceived at a glance that he stood in the presence of the King and his Prime Minister. The latter was sitting at a table, covered with papers and letters; the King was pacing the long chamber, with a very thoughtful expression of countenance. He looked up into the features of our hero without changing his expression, and made no sign that he recognised his old associate. Trepani bowed low, but the King without noticing it resumed his walk. The Count de ——— also looked up, with a dark frown on his sharp harsh features, and addressing the commander of the "Etna," said,

"You bring Admiral ——— despatches," and he held out his hand. As he did so the King suddenly opened a door leading into

another saloon, and retired. Trepani handed the sealed packet he took from the breast pocket of his uniform, and then, not seeing the King in the room, sat down.

The Count de ——— broke the seal, and eagerly perused the contents of the letter, his brow contracting as he read, his fingers moving nervously over the sheets. Having finished, he remained for some moments in deep thought; then, suddenly turning, he looked into our hero's calm features, saying sharply and in a very threatening tone,

"Your ship, Captain Trepani, bears a suspicious character; your officers and crew are denounced as being disaffected towards the present government; yet you have not reported any of this intelligence to your Admiral. What have you to say on that subject?"

"I have as yet had no cause of complaint either against my officers or my crew. It is only ten days ago since we captured a war brig, laden with arms, and carrying a strong force for landing at Marsala. They resisted, and my men boarded her under a heavy fire of musketry. They shewed no hesitation. Whatever may be their private thoughts, they do their duty, and I feel satisfied will do so."

"Do you tell me," interrupted the minister, with a flushed cheek, "you do not know that your lieutenant, Carlo Gonzalo, carries on a treasonable correspondence with his father? Hear this, and deny your participation in his treason, if you dare!"

"Dare!" repeated Captain Trepani, rising to his feet, an angry flush passing over his cheek and temple. "By whose authority, Count

de——, do you use such language to me? I deny that I ever participated or joined in any act against my king, that you—"

"Well! well!" said a voice from the adjoining room, and immediately the king returned to the apartment.

"Do not, Captain Trepani, give way to anger. I do not accuse you, I assure you."

Trepani bowed low, saying—

"Your Majesty shall never have reason, as long as justice is done me, my word believed, and my king lends not his name to my enemies to crush me, as they did my father."

"But, your majesty," hastily interrupted the minister, greatly excited, "you have not heard me read this letter of Lieut. Gonzalo to the Count, his father. I intended reading it to you when Captain Trepani entered. With your permission you shall hear it."

"The letter you wish to read, Count de ——," said Captain Trepani, sharply, "is an intercepted one—from a son to a father. The captain of a ship has no authority to intercept his officers' private correspondence, and such a mode—"

"Do not give way to anger, Signor Trepani," said the King, quietly. "Read the letter, Count. I feel satisfied that my former companion, Claudio Trepani, would scarcely conspire against his king without a cause, and though his lieutenant may entertain disaffected opinions, it does not follow that his commander should."

"Your Majesty shall judge," said the Count, bitterly; and taking a letter from a small, carefully-tied up parcel, he opened it, and after reading some few lines, said aloud—

"I beg your Majesty's attention."

He commenced in a clear, steady, voice—

"'Liberty at length appears possible; it comes, and under the banner of the noble and heroic Garibaldi. The dark cloud so long suspended over the doomed kingdom of the two Sicilies will be rent asunder, and the spirit-broken sons of this glorious land will unanimously shout, "Down with our tyrant, the detestable Bourbon!'"

The Count looked up, but the King remained perfectly calm.

"I think," continued the Count, "that there need be no doubt of Lieut. Gonzalo's disloyalty; and to say that his commander is not aware of his intended brother-in-law's sentiments would be—"

"Is there any more in that letter?" said the King, quietly; "I do not think you have finished it."

The Count de —— coloured slightly as he said—

"Well, the remainder may interest your Majesty;" and he read on.

"'I am aware that all on board this vessel would haul down the tyrant's flag; but they love their commander, and God knows, so do I, even if no connection were to take place between our families. He is a brave and gallant sailor; in his heart he owns the justness of our cause, but he loves—'"

The Count hesitated, and then said, sneeringly,

"'He loves his king; but, mark my words, the Bourbon will betray him, or sacrifice him, to please those in power, as the late king did his father.'"

"Enough," said Francis II. "Let this matter rest."

Turning to Captain Trepani he said—

"Upon you rests the responsibility of the officers and crew of the 'Etna.'"

"I entreat your Majesty," hastily interrupted the minister. "Pray read those few lines," and he handed the king a folded paper.

The young monarch read the few lines it contained. Evidently the perusal had a strange effect upon the king, for he remained several moments in deep thought. Claudio Trepani thought he perceived a malicious smile curl the lip of Count de ——. The next moment Francis II. said, turning to our hero—

"You may now retire, Captain Trepani; you will receive your despatches early tomorrow morning," and again turning, he at once left the saloon.

The Count de —— resumed his writing, and did not even look at Captain Trepani.

Our hero thought for a moment, then, without a word, passed from the room, finding the usher in the ante-room, who immediately conducted him from the private part of the Royal Palace, and left him in the great hall.

"It's very clear," said our hero to himself, "that I have a bitter, unrelenting enemy in the Count de ——. He ruined my father, disinherited me, and now wants to brand me as a traitor."

Having left the palace he again traversed the crowded, noisy city, until he reached the Strada Romani, a more retired street; but the houses are large and commodious, and inhabited by many of the Neapolitan nobles of the second class.

In a mansion in this street resided Ida Trepani, Claudio's only sister. She lived with a distant relation, to whom she was much attached, and who had offered her a home and protection when their father's death and their altered fortunes forced the orphans from their paternal mansion.

The Countess Manfredi — Ida Trepani's protectress — was advanced in years; a widow, and possessed of a handsome independence, and much esteemed for her charitable, kind disposition. Ida was the loved friend of Marina Gonzalo. She was two or three years older, of a more serious and thinking nature, and considered remarkably handsome and intellectual, and might, had she pleased, have had many suitors for her hand, though without fortune. But Ida, who tenderly loved her brother, gave all the rest

of her loving heart to his betrothed Marina, to whom she acted and felt as a fond sister.

Claudio Trepani found his sister alone in the saloon, the Countess having retired to her chamber early, slightly indisposed. Ida sprang from her seat, with a joyful exclamation, and threw her arms round her brother's neck.

"Oh! I am so glad you are here, Claudio!" exclaimed Ida. "I had no idea you would be able to leave Palermo. What has brought you? Is Palermo taken by—" She sunk her voice to a whisper as she said—"General Garibaldi?"

"No," returned her brother, seating himself beside Ida, on a couch. "No; but it will soon be in the hands of the insurgents; their success is marvellous, and the pusillanimity of the king's troops fearful."

Ida said, in a tone of reproach—

"You call those gallant deliverers insurgents, Claudio? Ah! when you know—"

"Know what, Ida?" returned Claudio, looking seriously into his sister's features. "You look pale and thin, Ida. You know—let me think what I may—I am a faithful servant of the king and queen, and will stand by the monarchy of Naples as long as my services are required by my sovereign; but what has happened, Ida? How is my own betrothed and beloved Marina?"

"Alas! I must tell you sad news, my brother—news that will shake your faith in kings and queens, such as rule over this unhappy city and country. The Count Gonzalo has been arrested by order of the Chief Minister of Police, and lodged in the frightful prison of Santa Maria. He is accused of

high treason, and of corresponding with the Brigands; so they style Garibaldi and his followers. The police seized all his papers and effects, and sealed up all chests and boxes containing papers and deeds. As soon as I heard of this terrible misfortune I hastened to the Gonzalo mansion, and found the Countess and her daughters in horrible dread and despair. Ah! it was then I first learned what a noble heroic spirit your Marina possesses. She soothed her heart-broken mother, who kept repeating, 'Alas! alas! to be accused of treason is to suffer death by torture.' But Marina's courage revived our spirits. 'We are giving way to despair!' she exclaimed, 'before we have made a trial to avert this cruel act of vindictiveness. Ida, you and I will proceed and visit the Prince de ———; he has great influence and power; he is my

godfather, and has often promised to remember that he is so.' I knew the prince was formerly a great favourite of the old king, and that his successor greatly esteemed him. The mother's spirits revived; the carriage was ordered, and we drove off at once to the prince's palace.

"Alas! instead of having an interview with the Prince, we found the whole household in disorder; that very morning the Prince had received orders from the King to quit Naples in an hour, and retire to one of his country mansions in Calabria. On making inquiries, we also learned that the Count Gonzalo had been removed from Santa Maria Apparente to the dungeons of Ischia."

"Ischia!" interrupted Claudio Trepani, eagerly. "If that is the fact, it is possible to release him."

"Release him," exclaimed Ida, in a tone of astonishment. "What mean you?"

"I cannot explain now, dear Ida," said her brother; "but go on, tell me of Marina. What did you do after that cruel disappointment?"

"The next day mother and daughter sought an interview, first with the Prime Minister, and then with the Chief of Police—all useless; they refused to receive them, and even were cruelly told that any further importunity would subject the Count to the torture.

"One morning, about a fortnight ago, we were all assembled in the blue saloon of the Gonzalo Palace, when a domestic entered, and announced the Signor Manzani—and that he wished to see the Countess Gonzalo alone. Though greatly surprised, the Countess

ordered the Signor Manzani to be shewn into the saloon, from which we immediately retired. I looked at Marina; she appeared exceedingly pale, but shewed neither agitation nor alarm. Bianca happening to leave us for a short time, Marina said to me, 'Ida, I know why that man comes here—he comes to negotiate for the release of my beloved father; as sure as we two sit here, he has been the abettor of my dear father's seizure. He seeks to unite his detested son, Giorgio Manzani, to me.'

"Marina was right; in half an hour the Signor Manzani left the house, and the Countess, with a sad and despairing expression of countenance, joined us. Marina threw herself into her mother's arms and burst into tears.

"'I know all, beloved mother; I see by

your countenance, by the tears in your eyes, that my destiny is decided.'

"'No, my child, no; do you think your noble father would accept life and liberty by the sacrifice of his child? Your acquiescence to the Signor Manzani's proposal would not alter the matter. Sooner than see you the wife of Giorgio Manzani, your father would die by the torture.'

"Still, such was Marina's love and devotion, and her intense desire to save her father, that she forced her mother to listen to Manzani's proposal, and a letter was conveyed to the Count, through the agency of Manzani, who, you know, has a powerful hold on the Minister of Police, having lent him an immense sum.

"When the Count Gonzalo read the letter and heard by what terms he could obtain his

release, he tore the paper to atoms, and bade his gaolers do their worst; he was ready to die under their fiercest tortures, but consent to his daughter's marriage with a Manzani, he never would. He openly stated that he was accused and imprisoned through Manzani's agency, and defied his accusers to prove one single charge against him."

"Noble Gonzalo," enthusiastically exclaimed Trepani; "a day of reckoning will come upon those wretches, who, under the mask of devotion to the crown, secure their own ends, commit atrocities horrible to think of, and absolve themselves by laying their crimes upon their king, rendering his name odious to screen themselves. As long as my King places faith in me, my life is at his service; suspect and denounce me, and I cast off my allegiance for ever. A proclama-

tion was issued the other day, to set free all prisoners, except political ones, who fill now, to overflowing, the prisons of Santa Maria Apparente, the Vicaria, St. Elmo, Procida, Castle Ova, and the fearful dungeons of Ischia—victims selected from the noblest hearts in the land, men who have dared to breathe the word freedom; whilst assassins, cut throats, robbers, galerians, the scum of our gaols, these have been set free, to howl and shout, '*Viva il Re!*' Our young King is supposed to commit these acts; but he, in reality, knows nothing of the infamous deeds committed by that detestable minister, the Count de—"

Scarcely had Claudio Trepani uttered those words in a vehement excited tone, when the door of the chamber was thrown open, and Lieut. Palatri, of the secret police, a man fearfully detested, entered the room, followed

by six of his armed men, who ranged themselves across the doorway.

Ida uttered a cry of alarm, but in a low whisper, as she threw herself before her brother, said,

"Escape by the back staircase."

"So, Signor Trepani," said the Lieutenant, with a malignant glance at our hero, who gently put his sister aside, and faced the police officer, "you indulge yourself in private with invectives hurled at our chief. I come to arrest you for high treason, and for conspiring with others to aid the brigands in Sicily, to whom you intend to sell the King's ship of war, 'Etna.'"

A scornful smile curled the irritated sailor's lip as he said,

"Have you the warrant for my arrest? Who is it signed by?"

"By our chief," said the Lieutenant, pro-

ducing the document; "and, moreover, sanctioned and signed by the King."

Claudio Trepani looked with disgust at the young King's signature.

As the Lieutenant folded up the document, he laid his hand on Captain Trepani's shoulder and called to his men to advance, for he well knew the fiery temper of the commander of the "Etna." With a powerful blow, Trepani struck him to the floor, and then sprang through the side door, slamming it in the faces of the furious police, who, imagining it led into another chamber, commenced bursting in the door, which resisted for some time all their efforts. Ida sank back upon the sofa, half-fainting. Lieut. Palatri, livid with rage, raised himself just as the door was burst open, and the men found themselves in a narrow corridor, closed by another strong door.

"Fools!" shouted the Lieutenant, "come back; get to the hall as fast as possible. Where," he exclaimed, fiercely, turning to Ida Trepani, "where does that door lead to? You shall pay dearly for this treason."

Ida arose, and gazing proudly at the exasperated officer, said,

"What have I to do with this? by what right have you secretly entered the Countess Manfredi's mansion?"

A shout from the hall aroused the Lieutenant; so, darting a look of rage at Ida, he rushed out of the saloon. On reaching the hall, he found one of the two men he had left to guard the entrance dead, pierced through the body by a sword; the other just recovered from a stunning blow he had received from the hilt of a heavy cutlass. Claudio Trepani had escaped.

"Now then," exclaimed the Lieutenant,

"let us make for the mole; we may entrap him yet. This time use your pistols. Had we not been told to take him alive, we should have had his body, at all events."

CHAPTER V.

Trepani, when he had made up his mind to resist the mandate of the King, said to himself, "Now I become a traitor, but the King himself has made me one. Had he not put his signature to the paper, I would have yielded. Now the die is cast."

Well aware of the private passage that led into the great hall, our hero rushed through the two doors, fastening them after him, and down a circuitous staircase, and opening a

small door, emerged into the hall leading to the main entrance. As he did so, sword in hand, the two men who were guarding the closed entrance made a rush at him with their drawn swords. Hearing the shouts above, and at once suspecting he was the person they were come to arrest, both made thrusts at our hero, one wounding him slightly on the right side. The next instant, the policeman was run through the heart, and fell dead at his comrade's feet. The man sprung back horrified, and the next instant was struck down by a blow from the hilt of Captain Trepani's cutlass. Our hero had little time to spare, for he heard sounds of pursuit; taking out the key of the door, he inserted it outside, pulling the door to and locking it.

"It will take them twenty minutes to get out at the back," said Claudio, as he pitched

the key to a distance, and then rapidly made his way to the quay.

Little heeding who he passed, or who wondered at his speed—for some of the streets through which he ran were still crowded—he reached the quay, and jumping into a boat, in which were four men, packing their nets, he said, "Come, my lads, take your oars. Here's ample reward for you," giving them a handful of ducats; "put me on board the man of war brig, off the mole."

"*Cospetto!* by the blessed St. Januarius, you shall be on board before you can say, an *ave*;" and seizing their oars, they bent to them, Neapolitan fashion, standing, and with their faces to the bow. Right before them was the red light on the cross trees of the "Etna," and the two blue lights over the bows. Ten minutes after their leaving the

quay, a six-oared barge, with the crown painted on each bow, and eight armed men in her stern sheets, shot out from the royal stairs, and pulled vigorously out for the red light of the "Etna." Suddenly the red and the blue lights disappeared, and there was heard the roar of steam escaping from a valve.

"Ah! curse his luck," exclaimed Lieutenant Patri, "they have their steam up, and he has got on board."

Such was the case, and the next moment those in the pursuing boat beheld the "Etna" ploughing through the still waters of the port.

Pursuit was vain, and with smothered execrations, the police boat returned slowly to the quay. Claudio Trepani was perfectly aware that the "Etna's" steam was kept up all through the night by his own orders, for

he did not know but he might have to return to Palermo with despatches to the fleet, at a moment's warning.

The "Etna" lay at a government mooring, ready to slip. So the moment he sprung upon the deck, he said to the watch, "Slip your moorings," and Lieutenant Gonzalo coming up, orders were given to put on steam, and get under weigh.

These orders were obeyed without causing any surprise or excitement. When fairly under weigh, and giving directions to steer direct to sea, he took Gonzalo, his lieutenant, by the arm, saying, "Come to the cabin; I have sad and important tidings to relate."

Lieutenant Gonzalo, who was devoted in his friendship and affection for his commander, felt startled and anxious. On reaching the cabin, Trepani threw himself

on a sofa, and related all that had occurred from the period of leaving the ship to his return.

Lieutenant Gonzalo was horrified at hearing that his father was a prisoner in the terrible dungeons of Ischia.

"Heavens! What can be done, Claudio?" he passionately exclaimed. "I have always said that no faith was to be placed in the King; he's as perfidious as his accursed advisers. There is not a man on board this ship who would not joyfully haul down the Neapolitan flag, and hoist that of Garibaldi."

"That I cannot do, *amico*. I will not serve a King so false, and so easily ruled; but I can never raise my hand against him, or help in any way to pull him down. But I will tell you what I propose to do. One thing is certain. I will make the

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attempt to release your father from the dungeons of Ischia. But I must first proceed to, and land near the Gonzalo mansion, and hear what has occurred, for my sister hinted that something had happened to Marina, and I am intensely anxious. Believe me, things are coming to a crisis; Garibaldi once in Palermo, it will not be long before Naples rises against the Bourbons, and the feeling now spreading all over the Continent, is to hail Victor Emanuel sole King of Italy."

"All this I know and feel," said Lieutenant Gonzalo, "and it is only what every Italian's heart prays for. To a certain extent, I cannot deny that your intention of not fighting against your King is right; you were playfellows, and till his feelings were warped and worked upon, he loved you, though he permitted his ministers to retain the inheritance

so cruelly torn from your father by the late King. I have no such feeling for him, and the moment I see my beloved father freed from his prison, I will join the bands of General Garibaldi. But tell me, for it appears almost impossible, how do you propose to get my father out of the prison of Ischia? To storm it, I know, is out of the question."

"Quite," returned Captain Trepani, "it must be by a ruse; at present my plan is this; the Neapolitan fleet is now, as you know, before Palermo. To-morrow night, or rather to-night, for I see it is nearly two o'clock in the morning — there are only fifty soldiers guarding the prison; it cannot be attacked from the land side, for the draw-bridges over the causeway are always raised— this evening, I will run boldly in, and anchor off the prison. I will land with thirty

men, escorting several prisoners, some of my own men disguised as such. Once inside the gates, I'll answer for the rest."

"The plan is good," said Lieutenant Gonzalo, "but will not the 'Etna' be recognised, and after what has passed, may we not be fired into from the castle and the alarm given."

"No. I do not think the attempt to arrest me will be made public by the Chief of the Police. It will be kept secret for political reasons. Everything tending to excite disaffection in the army and navy will be carefully concealed from the Neapolitans. At all events it must be risked, for your father's life is at stake. Every hour is of importance."

The young men, after giving certain directions to the officer on deck, threw themselves on the sofa for two or three hours' repose.

By nine o'clock in the morning, the 'Etna' was close in with the shore, right opposite the Gonzalo mansion. Leaving the brig lying to, our hero and Lieutenant Gonzalo proceeded ashore in the gig, pulled by four oars.

On landing they proceeded at a quick pace towards the house. On approaching the gates they perceived Bianca Gonzalo and a female attendant hurrying down the avenue to meet them, for she had at once recognised the 'Etna.'

Marco embraced his sister with warmth, though with a sad and troubled expression of countenance. Trepani, as he pressed the hand held out to him, saw that tears were in her eyes. He felt agitated and his voice was tremulous, as he said,

"It is as I feared, there is something

alarming respecting Marina. What has occurred? Ida prepared me for evil tidings, but had no time to tell me. Speak, dear Bianca."

"Alas! Our beloved Marina has been carried off," said Bianca weeping.

"Good God! Carried off, and by whom?" questioned Captain Trepani.

"Come in, and I will tell you all the particulars. Alas! 'tis a mysterious and incomprehensible affair."

Greatly agitated, the Captain of the 'Etna' and his Lieutenant entered the house, and whilst Marco Gonzalo hurried to his mother's chamber, for she was exceedingly ill, Bianca threw herself into a chair, Claudio Trepani seating himself by her side.

"I am most anxious, dear Bianca, for, if my beloved betrothed is carried off, it must be

by the machination and schemes of Giorgio Manzani, and on him my vengeance shall fall if I perish in inflicting it.''

"No," said Bianca in a sad tone, "I do not think Giorgio Manzani had any hand in the outrage that has inflicted such misery upon us, but you shall hear.

"We were sitting—that is my mother, Marina and myself—were sitting, in this very saloon. It was late, and we had dismissed all the domestics to bed; we were conversing on our dear father's melancholy situation, and longing for your return to Naples, when suddenly a loud crash, as if a door was violently burst open, alarmed us, we all started to our feet, gazing at each other, but Marina, seizing a candle opened the door and ran out into the hall intending to pull the alarm bell, to bring the male

domestics, who sleep in a remote wing. She had scarcely made a step into the hall before, uttering a cry, she rushed back trying to close the door, but more than a dozen men, wild and lawless in their looks and each wearing a red shirt or frock and a red cap, filled the room. They were all armed with pistols in their sashes and naked cutlasses in their hands. A tall, powerful looking man habited as the rest, but wearing a close fitting mask of black crape over his face, seized Marina in his grasp.

"Alas! what was our feeble strength and struggles against those wretches; our mother fainted, but this man lifted Marina in his arms, seized a mantle one of his men carried and wrapping her in it, smothering her cries in its folds, bore her from the saloon, his followers plundering it of every article that pleased them and threatening us with

death if we attempted to stir for half-an-hour. They then left the saloon. We heard the trampling of feet all over the house and the screams of our female domestics. I was anxiously recovering my beloved mother, when suddenly the noise and trampling of feet ceased and all became still. The door of the saloon was locked. I tried but could not force it open. We then threw up the window and gazed out in an agony of mind indescribable.

"At this time it was exceedingly dark and a strong breeze agitated the trees and drowned all sound, but as we gazed towards the sea a rocket shot up into the air and a bright dazzling blue light for a minute illumed the agitated waters of the bay. We then perceived that the light was shown from a vessel evidently near the shore, we could see her distinctly; she was a long vessel with three

masts and her lofty lateen yards towered towards the dark sky above. Her head was turned towards the shore. As the strong glare fell upon her bows, I could distinguish that her figurehead was a man in the garb of a fisherman, with a red cap on his head, with his arm outstretched."

"This is very strange," said Claudio Trepani.

"What is there strange in that, dear Claudio," said Bianca, surprised.

"I will tell you when you finish, Bianca," said our Hero, "I was struck by your description of the vessel."

"I have very little more to relate," said Bianca; "we remained prisoners till the dawn when the gardener and his son, getting assistance, burst in the doors at the back. He was horrified on perceiving all the flower beds in

the garden trampled by many feet, and not a soul stirring about the house.

"The male domestics were found bound and gagged, and every article of gold and silver in the various apartments carried off. The women were locked in one chamber and we perceived that Marina's special female attendant had evidently been carried off with her mistress.

"We instantly sent off to the police station and an hour afterwards an officer and four men made their appearance.

"We all underwent a long and tiresome investigation that promised to lead to no result; then they left us, telling us very coolly that no doubt the vessel we saw was one of the Garibaldi piratical crafts and that nothing could be done in such a case. My mother was indignant at this treatment and over-

whelmed with grief and dismay at the fate of our beloved Marina; she protested it was quite impossible that the ruffians who had carried off Marina could be Garibaldi's followers. She openly declared that Giorgio Manzani was the author of the outrage.

"I would gladly have taken my mother's view of the case, for bad and wicked as we suppose Giorgio Manzani to be, he still would resort to no violent outrage upon Marina beyond endeavouring to persuade her to become his wife. But I feared the villains were common *Ladri di Mare* emboldened by the unprotected state of our coast, and the condition of affairs, to land and plunder mansions near the coast. This idea made me infinitely more wretched."

"My dear Bianca," said Captain Trepani, greatly agitated and distressed, "I

am much more inclined to believe that Giorgio Manzani was the daring perpetrator of this cowardly outrage."

"Well," continued Bianca, with a sigh, "to our great relief your sister Ida arrived; and she at once, when she heard the full particulars, proposed to drive over to the Manzani mansion, not to accuse Giorgio of being the author of this crime, but to be guided by circumstances.

"As we drove up the avenue to the mansion, we perceived Giorgio Manzani carelessly sauntering down the avenue, in a morning dress.

"'Good heavens!' I exclaimed, to Ida; 'there he is. Surely if he had—'

"'Hush!' said Ida, 'he is close to us;' and in truth, he came up to the carriage door

as the driver pulled up, and taking off his hat, said that he was rejoiced to see us, and that his sister was at home, and would be equally glad.

"Ida and I were both flushed and excited, and rather puzzled what to say at the moment; but the young man, looking up into my face, as the carriage drew up at the door, for he walked by the side till it did so, said,

"'You look, Signora Gonzalo, as if something troubled you. Has anything unusual happened? but I pray you to alight,' and preventing his domestics from intruding, he opened the door of the carriage.

"Ida immediately said, 'Signor Manzani, we came here to see your father, who, having great interest with the Minister of Police, may aid us in discovering the perpetrators of

a most cruel outrage. The Signora Marina Gonzalo was carried off last night by a band of ruffians from the sea.'

"I had my eyes fixed intently on the young Signor Manzani's face.

"'What!' said he, in a bold and fearless manner, 'can what you say be facts? Marina Gonzola carried off by ruffians!—this must be looked to instantly. Will you alight, Signoras, whilst I order my horse to proceed to Naples. My father is there, and will, I feel satisfied, exert all his power to aid you; but I pray you explain, for I am bewildered and shocked.'

"We were now both of opinion we wronged Giorgio Manzani, for he appeared most anxious and most excited, and desirous of starting at once for Naples, to engage a Guarda Costa, to scour the seas in pursuit.

'They must,' he said, 'be a band of ruffians, under the disguise of Garibaldians, that committed this terrible outrage.'

"'Yes,' said Ida, calmly, 'such ruffians might plunder the house; but what object could they have in carrying off my sister and her own special attendant?'

"'True; what object?' repeated Giorgio Manzani, thoughtfully. 'But we lose precious time. Since you will not alight, I will just change my dress, and proceed to Naples. Before two hours are over, a cruiser of war shall be under weigh, and in pursuit. 'You describe,' he added, 'the vessel as a lateen-rigged vessel, with a man's body for a figure-head?'

"I again described the vessel; and a domestic leading up his horse, he bade us adieu, to change his dress; and ordering our coach-

man to drive home, I fell back in the carriage, perfectly bewildered.

"'If that young man is guilty,' said Ida, 'he is a consummate actor. I am perplexed. What is now to be done! I wish to heaven Claudio was here with his vessel! but he is at Palermo.' The next day your sister was forced to return to Naples, her protector, the Countess Manfredi, having been taken suddenly ill."

"Have you heard nothing since from Giorgio Manzano?" demanded Captain Trepani.

"Only a note, containing a few lines, simply stating that the Guarda Costa, the 'San Lorenzo' was off in pursuit, and in a few days he trusted to send us hopeful news."

"Ha!" said Claudio, "now I could almost

swear that this man, Giorgio, is concerned in this accursed business;" and the young man stamped on the floor with passion, his face flushing crimson with intense excitement.

"But why do you speak so positively?" said Bianca.

"Because," returned Trepani, "Giorgio Manzani told a falsehood when he wrote you word that the 'San Lorenzo' was despatched in pursuit of the abductors, for the 'San Lorenzo' was in the harbour of Palermo when I left, and has been there, attending as a despatch boat, for several weeks—so that stamps the man a liar, at all events."

Bianca grew pale, and her voice faltered, as she said,

"You have startled me; and yet, I would rather Marina was in the power of Giorgio

Manzani than a lawless, ruffianly band of *Ladri di Mare.*"

"So would I, Bianca, terrible as her situation would be. Manzani might try to force her into a marriage; grossly insult or ill-use her, he dare not; but the thing is to discover where he has carried her to, and how to deliver her out of his hands. The vessel you describe, I conjecture to be a lateen-rigged craft known as the 'Massaniello,' a suspicious craft, certainly; but, still, a vessel well known in many ports as a trader."

"But why do you say she is a suspicious vessel, Claudio? Perhaps the vessel I got a glimpse of was not the 'Massaniello.'"

"I will tell you, Bianca, all I know concerning the 'Massaniello,' and were it not for your bringing her to my mind, I should

probably never have thought more of the circumstance I shall now relate to you.

"On the twenty-fifth of last month I was in the Port of Lemnos, when I received orders to join the fleet under Admiral P——, then off Palermo, as Garibaldi and his thousand brigands, as they are styled by the Neapolitan Count, were expected to attempt a landing on some part of the coast of Sicily. Twenty-four hours after leaving Lemnos, just at day-break, the man on the look out aloft stated that he perceived, away on the larboard bow some dark object floating in the water. There was very little wind and no sea; I took my glass when I came on deck, and fixed it on the spot indicated, imagining it might be part a wreck, and some poor wretch clinging to it for life. I easily made out—several

spars, and two or three casks; but I also discovered a human figure clinging to them. I ordered the man at the wheel to steer for the wreck, and on reaching the spot, perceived a young sailor lying, nearly insensible, upon the spars, and fastened to his frail support by pieces of rigging. We soon had him aboard, and the surgeon very quickly revived him, and he was put in a berth for a few hours' repose. The next day he was sufficiently recovered to relate to me how he came in the situation we found him in.

"His name, he said, was Luigi Carni, a native of Ancona, and he had been a sailor from his earliest years. He shipped as able seaman aboard the Italian brigantine, 'Carlotta,' then taking in a cargo at Lapini. When ready for sea, they sailed for Livourno and Genoa. When three days at sea, just at sun-down,

they perceived, at a short distance, the spars and casks we had rescued him from—wind at the time light, and from the south-east. They bore away for the wreck, and at the same time, perceived a large three-masted xebecque under full sail, steering direct after them, as they thought, aboard the 'Carlotta,' to reconnoitre the same objects, the spars and the casks. It was quite dark as they reached the spars, and the strange craft kept on the starboard quarter. Suddenly she shifted her helm, and ran aboard the 'Carlotta' with great violence, and the next minute some twenty or thirty armed men boarded the brigantine, exclaiming, 'Whoever resists will receive no quarter.'

"'I was standing,' said Luigi Carni, to use his own words, 'right in the bows, leaning over to look at the wreck; the shock

threw me off my balance, and I fell overboard, but at once scrambled upon the spars, the brigantine and the xebecque forging ahead.

"'I heard terrible oaths, and the noise of a violent struggle. "They are pirates," said I to myself, "I will stay where I am; they will murder my unfortunate comrades." I watched the two vessels with great anxiety, for we all drifted the same way. The head of the xebecque was towards me, and presently I saw a large lantern held over the bows. I then perceived the figure head of the vessel; it was the representation of a fisherman, with a red cap on his head, and legs bared to the knees.

"'I could make out that the pirates were unloading our brigantine, and transferring the boxes and chests into the xebecque. At this time there was not a breath of wind; it was

intensely dark, but there were lights on board both vessels. I might be a hundred yards off, which prevented them seeing me. I then saw the two vessels separate, the xebecque using long sweeps, and steering to the north-west, as well as I could judge. I was gazing at our brigantine, wondering if I could regain her, and I thought I perceived her settling deeper and deeper in the water, when I was horrified by seeing her suddenly fall over to port; a wild cry was heard in the stillness of the night; and our ill-fated craft lurched forward, and disappeared beneath the calm sea."

"Oh! blessed virgin!" exclaimed Bianca, clasping her hands. "How horrible! Did the wretches doom the whole crew to so fearful a death?"

"So it appears, from Luigi Carni's account," said Claudio Trepani, "he states

that before morning, a breeze sprung up, and then a dense fog and a heavy sea; he was forced to lash himself, to avoid being washed off; and this was his situation the third day when we fortunately picked him up. Such is the circumstance that caused me, dear Bianca, to suppose that the vessel you beheld, and the one that Luigi Carni saw, were the same; and the name of the vessel is no doubt the 'Massaniello,' from the famous liberator of Napoli. But the worst of this is, the extreme difficulty of identifying the right vessel, for there are fifty Italian vessels of that name, and a dozen or so belonging to Naples alone. It is a favourite cognomen amongst lateen rigged craft owners belonging to our shores."

"But what could Giorgio Manzani have to say, to wretches of the class Luigi Carni describes as the crew?" said Bianca.

"Ah! there lies a mystery I cannot solve," said the sailor; "it's quite possible that Marina was carried off by land, and the appearance of that vessel a mere ruse. You describe the person who seized Marina as apparently a young man, that he wore a mask, and that he uttered not a word. Now, wearing a mask is not a likely thing with the leader of a band of Sea Robbers, if he was only a ruffianly plunderer. Neither would such villains carry off females, unless heavily bribed to do so. Therefore my firm opinion is that those men were employed by Giorgio Manzani, and that it was he himself who seized and carried off Marina."

Just then, Marco Gonzalo entered the saloon, telling Claudio Trepani that his mother most earnestly desired to see and speak to him.

CHAPTER VI.

The Castle of Ischia, one of the many horrible prisons, in which the Neapolitan King immured his victims, stands on the extremity of a narrow causeway, stretching across the shallow waters of the bay, till it enters the deep waters. It is a building of considerable strength, and was used for holding political prisoners of importance, and where tortures of a fearful kind were used to extort confession of a political crime, of which the

miserable victim, in nine cases out of ten, was innocent. The building was defended by strong ramparts, on which heavy cannons were ranged; there was no way of approaching it by land, except over the causeway; and that was defended by heavy cannon on the walls, and by several drawbridges, under which flowed the tideless waters of the lovely bay, whose waves frequently, in stormy weather, broke over its strong walls. Its position was particularly secure from political tumults and mob riots in the city. A more detestable tyrant than Ferdinand the First of Naples scarcely ever existed, and yet in a country where cold steel is frequently used in getting rid of oppressors, Ferdinand died quietly on his bed. Whether his son, who succeeded him, would, without evil counsellors, have acted the despot as effectually as

his sire, we cannot say, as very little time was left him to rule, or for his subjects to judge. However, at the period of our story, every prison in Naples was crammed full of political victims, to make room for whom that large and respectable class of Neapolitans termed assassins and robbers were liberated, and prowled about the city, rejoicing at the discrimination of the young King, whom they lauded to the skies.

Amongst all the prisons, Ischia was the most dreaded, for a greater part of its cells and dungeons were beneath the waters of the bay, and were rank with moisture.

The fishermen's boats never anchored near the dreaded walls of Ischia, for the shrieks of the tortured pealed over the still waters, during the hours of the night, with a fearful distinctness. The sea around the Castle of

Ischia, darkened by the deep sombre shadows of its massive and lofty walls, was carefully shunned by vessels and boats—in fact, no vessel was allowed to approach within a certain distance, unless a government one.

The sun was setting in a sea of gold, the sky glorious in resplendent colours; not a ripple disturbed the waters of that beautiful bay; the hum of human voices from the restless people of Naples was wafted over the waters, countless crafts of every sort and rig were lying listless on the lake-like bay, when a remarkably handsome gun brig, impelled onwards by her screw propeller approached the sea entrance to the Castle of Ischia. Every sail was furled, the screw alone moved her gently through the bay, the sun dipped beneath the waves as the brig rounded to, and let go her anchor within pistol shot of

the formidable guns on the ramparts of the prison.

Leaning over the rampart, and gazing out earnestly over the waters, was the governor of the castle, as cruel and pitiless a tyrant as any in the service of the young king.

To him the infliction of torture appeared an amusement : he beheld his victims sometimes perish under the infliction, shrugging his shoulders and merely saying,

"*Per Bacco*! what a miserable wretch!"

Those his tortures did not kill, his slimy, water-soaked dungeons did. Once an inmate of the garrison, no matter for what crime, the victim returned no more to talk with his fellow men of his sufferings in Ischia.

Standing beside the governor was an officer of the garrison; they were smoking cigars. As the gun brig anchored, the governor said,

"Why, how is this?" pointing with his cigar to the vessel; "that is the 'Etna' gun brig, Captain Trepani. *Corpo di Bacco*! that's strange; she left the bay last night. See, she is putting out boats."

"Probably she is bringing us prisoners, sent from Palermo in a sailing vessel, and put aboard her for speed; it's so calm."

"Ah! well," returned the governor, with a laugh; "we have a few cells to spare, since the last batch made such a poor hand at bearing the torture. I never saw men so abject and cowardly; one only stood the third turn of the windlass."

"St. Januarius!" returned Captain Lotero, with a grin; "I should not like to try one turn, with a principality in perspective."

"See," said the governor, lighting another cigar; "the boats are approaching the gates,

and there's just light enough to see that they have several prisoners, bound, amongst them. You had better go, Lotero, and tell the Signor Manzani that the 'Etna' is off the landing place, and sending prisoners ashore; he is somehow not very friendly to this Captain Trepani, and there are vague rumours going about that the commander of the 'Etna' is no longer a favourite at court."

"I observed," said Captain Lotero, lingering, "that the Signor Manzani was going to say something about the 'Etna' when he checked himself."

"So he was," returned the Governor, thoughtfully; "the Signor brings an order to put the Count Gonzalo to the torture to-night. I have ordered all the preparations to be made; he will stand an unlimited amount of punishment, for he has a fierce and un-

bending spirit; but make haste and tell him that Captain Trepani is landing, for I know he would not like to meet this hot-headed commander, especially as he is going to witness the torture applied to his intended father-in-law. I shall go and meet this Captain of the 'Etna;' he must be kept ignorant of who is in the prison cells. By the way, our garrison is small—only five-and-twenty men."

"Better not let this Captain and his men within the inner gates," said the Captain.

"Well, perhaps it would," said the Governor, hastening from the rampart. "*Per Meafede!* I think I'm rather late," he muttered, as he descended the lofty flight of steps.

Captain Lotero, in the meantime, proceeded to the chamber where the Signor Manzani was sitting before a table, on which stood a

lighted lamp, and several papers, which he was perusing. He looked up as the Captain entered.

Lotero at once said—

"The Governor desires me to say, Signor, that Captain Trepani is just landing from the 'Etna' brig."

"*Santa Madonna*!" said the Signor Manzani, starting to his feet; "is it possible? Have they taken him already? That is fortunate."

Captain Lotero stared.

"Taken who, Signor?" he exclaimed. "I know that Captain Trepani has just anchored off the Gates, and is bringing some prisoners ashore."

"*Santa Madonna*!" exclaimed the Signor, turning deadly pale. "Run and close the gates; fire on the brig. Captain Trepani is

a traitor; don't stand there! we are lost, if he gets within the gates," and clasping his hands, he sank back into his chair, while Captain Lotero, seriously frightened, rushed from the room.

The governor, we said, hurried towards the great gates; his pace quickened by hearing a confused sound of voices, and the clashing of arms. As he entered the courtyard he perceived that ten of his men were prisoners to the armed escort who had been allowed to enter the gates with a dozen apparently bound prisoners; but the moment they had all passed the gates, their bonds dropped off. Captain Trepani seized the officer on guard, and mastered him, and in five minutes, or less, half the garrison were subdued, bound, and thrust into one of the strong guard-rooms on either side of the gate. Before the para-

lysed governor could retreat, or utter the command that a cannon facing the causeway should be fired, he was in the grasp of Capt. Trepani, whilst Lieut. Gonzolo, with fifteen or twenty armed marines, rushed upon the ramparts, and, after a very faint resistance, the whole garrison, including Captain Lotero, were overcome and secured.

A guard was then stationed at the causeway gate, and every precaution taken that neither signal nor alarm should be given to the guard houses, near the drawbridges, for, had a cannon been fired, suspicion would have been roused; and not a mile from the castle, to the west, lay the Neapolitan frigate, the "Serena."

It was a bold and reckless adventure on the part of Captain Trepani, and must have failed had it been publicly known that the

commander of the "Etna" was supposed to be a traitor, and had carried off the gun brig to join Garibaldi. But this was kept secret by order of the minister of police, for Claudio Trepani's arrest had not the sanction of the king; the king's signature shewn Trepani by the officer ordered to arrest him was to a totally different document. Had Captain Trepani been arrested, he would have been thrust into one of the dungeons of Ischia, and perished there, for the unscrupulous minister would have easily managed afterwards to convince the king that the commander of the "Etna" was a traitor. The "Etna" had therefore passed the two forts unchallenged, and anchored, without creating surprise, before the castle of Ischia.

The rage, mortification, and despair of the Governor of Ischia would be difficult to

describe. Turn out which way it might—the loss of the castle, even for an hour, would cause his utter disgrace and ruin, if not worse."

"We must be quick," said Trepani to his lieutenant, "so summon or bring in here the principal gaolers. We must get your father out as quickly as possible, and then be off."

They were standing in the large reception-room of the prison, having locked up the governor and his officers in a strong cell.

Three of the head gaolers were brought into the chamber—sullen and ferocious-looking men they were. Turning to the principal, a powerful, savage-looking man, with one eye—the other having been knocked out by a prisoner he was preparing to put on the windlass, the wretched man, with the heavy chains that bound his hands, struck his

gaoler in the face, knocking his eye out, and splitting his upper lip; this rendered his countenance even more disgusting to behold—

"Lead us to the dungeon of the Count Gonzalo," said Claudio Trepani, "and be quick."

With one of his assistants bearing the keys and a couple of torches, the man sullenly obeyed, our hero and Marco Gonzalo, and two of their men, with pistol and cutlass in hand, following.

Marco Gonzalo felt intense excitement. He feared to find his father either mutilated by the torture, or dying from a fearful imprisonment. Passing through the lighted corridors, they were suddenly startled by cries of agony and groans proceeding from a chamber at a little distance.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed Claudio Trepani, with a flushed cheek, and grasping the head gaoler by the arm.

"A prisoner," he said, carelessly, "undergoing punishment for refusing to acknowledge his being a traitor."

"Infernal wretch!" exclaimed the sailor, casting the man from him; and he and Gonzalo, rushing forward, dashed open the door of a cell, and beheld four men in their shirt sleeves, forcing a man, stripped to his drawers, to seat himself on a chair covered with spikes of steel, half an inch long, underneath which was a large brazier full of lighted charcoal.

Trepani, with the flat of his cutlass, and shuddering with horror, struck one of the men to the ground, and released the wretched prisoner, who sunk fainting on the floor. The furious gaolers, who were

ignorant of what had taken place, turned upon their assailant, seeing that, with the head gaoler and his two assistants, they outnumbered the strangers; but short was the scuffle, for the leader sullenly called out—"the castle is in the hands of traitors; resistance is useless;" for which piece of information he was nearly run through the body by Marco Gonzalo.

Locking the gaolers into a cell our hero left two of his men to assist the exhausted prisoner to dress and to take him to where the rest of the "Etna's" men were, and to place him under the charge of the second lieutenant who, with more men, had by that time landed from the gun brig, according to previous directions.

The gaoler, muttering denunciations in an under breath, led the way down a steep flight

of stone stairs, the walls dripping with moisture and the air thick and unpleasant to those breathing it.

Here and there a solitary lamp lighted the wretched vaulted corridor they entered. After descending the immense flight of steps, they were many feet below the waters of the bay. On each side were the cells for the miserable prisoners, and many a stifled groan and prayer uttered aloud saluted their ears as they passed them.

"Good Heavens!" said Claudio Trepani to his lieutenant, "how horrible; I would I could release all these unfortunate victims, but how can we? A moment's delay may ruin our project."

They came to another flight of steps, down which the gaoler threw the light of his

torch with a ghastly grin on his harsh features.

"The Count is below here," he said.

Marco Gonzalo stamped with rage, exclaiming,

"Oh! my father, my poor persecuted father," and almost leaped down the flight of steps in his intense anxiety; the very flags were covered with slime, and the water oozed through the brick arches; there were eight cells.

"Good Heavens!" said the commander of the 'Etna,' "can human beings exist in these fearful cells?"

"I occupied one of the worst for three years," said the head gaoler, with a laugh of derision, as he fitted a huge key into a cell door, "and I'm not dead yet."

"More's the pity," said Claudio Trepani, "and more's the pity that those stony hearts that could condemn a fellow creature to such misery are not inmates for a few weeks of these accursed abodes, in order to have an idea of human suffering."

"I wish I had you all in here," muttered the gaoler to himself, as he threw open the door. "*Santa Madonna*! I would give three years of my life. You should know what the brazier, and the razor chair meant. The Count Gonzalo is here," said the gaoler aloud, proceeding to flash his torch to disperse the damp deadly vapour, that hung upon the wet ground, the dripping walls and dripping roof.

"Oh! my God! My father," exclaimed Marco Gonzalo, as he sprang to the side of a wooden frame, on which some wet straw was

thrown, and on which lay the emaciated form of a man, with no other covering than the soiled and worn garments he wore when seized.

As Marco Gonzalo knelt by the side of the pallet, and Claudio clenched his hands in suppressed rage and feeling, the Count raised his head and beheld his son. He threw his arm round his neck, and in a weak but distinct voice said,

"God has heard my prayers. I see my boy before I die. Marco, my child," and he pressed his pallid face, to his distracted son's cheek.

"We cannot stand thus, delay is death," said Claudio Trepani, and lifting the Count in his powerful arms, he left the cell, with one of his crew carrying a torch.

Marco Gonzalo thrust the gaoler into the

cell, with a bitter imprecation on his cruelty to his father, and locking the door on the man, who poured forth a torrent of oaths and denunciations, he hastened after his commander.

Trepani carried the benumbed body of the Count Gonzalo into the guardroom and placed him, wrapped in blankets, before the fire and giving him some wine, he began slowly to revive.

The prisoner they had rescued from the torture, was sitting beside the fire, leaning his head upon his hand. As soon as he beheld the Count Gonzalo, he staggered from his chair and threw himself at his feet, taking his hands in his, and kissing them till they were wet with his tears.

" My poor Roberto, is this indeed you, and have they been torturing you too."

"Ah, *Madonna*! my Lord, twice they put me to the torture, stretched on a frame till my sinews cracked, to make me sign my name to a confession charging you with being joined with the Prince D—— and others, and with corresponding with Garibaldi. I refused to put my name; but to-night I must have died or signed the paper, for they were going to put me on the brazier and in a chair covered with razor blades. Ah! God will overthrow these tyrants."

Marco Gonzalo just then entered the chamber, and at once recognised his father's faithful secretary, Roberto Ricaoli.

"We must get them on board at once," said Claudio Trepani, "the men at the causeway gate, say that there are several lights advancing, and one of the men belonging to the prison said they expect thirty men, back to

the garrison who went away yesterday with twenty prisoners, charged and condemned to the galleys. If an alarm is raised we shall have the 'Serena frigate' in pursuit and by night signals, the fort of Castle Ova might be warned, and they would open fire upon us, as we round the rock.'

One of the "Etna's" crew now came running in saying,

"A large party of soldiers had passed the last drawbridge, and were then within five hundred yards of the gates."

Little did Claudio Trepani imagine that in an upper chamber of the Castle the Signor Manzani was concealed in a closet, trembling with fear lest our hero would search for and discover him.

In a few minutes the Count Gonzalo and his secretary were placed in a kind of litter,

made from the bottom canvass of the soldiers' beds, and wrapping them in all the blankets they could get, they prepared to proceed to the boats at the landing place.

Just as they cleared the great gates, the loud tones of a bell pealed through the air.

It was the great bell of the causeway gate. Hurrying on they reached the boats and placed the rescued prisoners in the stern sheets, the men urged the boats on to the brig; her steam was up, and its roar could be heard as it was let off through the escape pipe. Just as they all got aboard and the moorings were cast off, two rockets of a peculiar kind shot up into the dark sky from the ramparts of the castle.

"Ah!" said Captain Trepani, as the 'Etna's' screw turned her prow seaward, "the alarm is given."

As the brig ploughed through the still waters. Several blue lights, were exhibited aboard the "Serena" frigate. She could be seen from the "Etna," setting her snow white canvass, and heaving overboard her moorings, and then came the loud boom of a cannon from Ischia, the round shot dashing the water into spray as it ricocheted over the sea, within a few yards of the gun brig.

"Luckily it's a dark night," said Captain Trepani to his Lieutenant, "and the wind so light, that the 'Serena' will hardly make six knots through the water, and we are going nearly twelve."

On flew the fastest boat for her size on Neapolitan waters. The fort was passed without a single shot being fired, for the garrison were not on the alert, and the

signals were fortunately not understood. As the morning dawned the "Etna" had sunk the Islands to a mere speck, and with sail and steam, was steering a course for Genoa.

CHAPTER VII.

Marina Gonzalo, when seized and enveloped in the folds of a large mantle, and torn from the plundered mansion of her father, had an instinctive feeling as to who was the author of the outrage.

She felt certain that the man in the mask, who carried her in his arms, was Giorgio Manzani. Nearly suffocated by the folds of the mantle, she with difficulty breathed. She knew, however, that her persecutor was

carrying her towards the sea, for the sound of the surf as it ran up on the shingly beach became every moment more audible. Suddenly she felt herself placed sitting upon a bench, which she judged was the seat of a boat, and she heard several men speaking, and then the stifled cry of a female voice. She thought to herself, they had carried off one of the female domestics, for whoever it was began sobbing and crying. She heard orders given to shove the boats off and presently they were afloat, and still a man held the folds of the mantle but so relaxed that she could breathe more freely. In a few moments they came alongside a vessel, she was lifted up and carried across the deck her bearer descended some stairs and then placed her on a soft seat, and she knew that the person who was sobbing was placed beside

her, and then the hold on the mantle was entirely relaxed, and the sound of a man's steps ascended the stairs. Making an effort Marina threw off the heavy mantle and drawing her breath with freedom, gazed around her. She discovered she was in a ship's cabin, lighted by a swinging lamp from the ceiling; but her attention was instantly attracted to the bundle of shawls and clothes beside her. A human being enfolded in them was making every effort to free herself, but could not for a cord bound them right round her. Marina instantly untied the cord, and in a few seconds unfolded the thick shawls and out came the pretty dishevelled head of a young female, no other than her favourite attendant Anna. The poor girl, who was infinitely more terrified than her mistress, had nearly worked herself into hysterics. But the sight

of her young mistress, who was sitting calm and composed on the sofa beside her, reassured her, and clasping her mistress's hands. She burst into tears.

"*Oh, Madonna!* Dear mistress, what shall we do? Who are the villains. Where are we?"

"I can only tell you, Anna," returned Marina soothingly, "though it is selfish for me to say so, it's a wonderful relief to have you with me in the terrible trial it has pleased God to inflict on me."

"Oh! my dear mistress," exclaimed the young maid, "if my being with you makes you feel easier, have no fear about me. I can die to serve you, but I was so awfully terrified. I did not know you were carried off as well as myself. Who has dared to take you from your home."

"Giorgio Manzani, is the wicked contriver of this cowardly outrage," said Marina.

"Ah! then I have not half the fear I had," said Anna, briskly getting up, and very quietly settling her disordered hair and dress, "he is a bad wicked man, but he is a Signor of station and wealth; he may wish to try and make you marry him, but he will not dare to insult you, and you see he ordered me to be carried off too, to attend on you. I was afraid those wretches were *Ladri di Mare.*"

"But, Anna, how came you to be dressed," said Marina, now closely observing her attendant, "you had all long retired to bed when these men burst into the house."

"Ah! *Holy Mary*," said Anna, "I shall never forget the fright I got, when I heard the great crash of the burst-in door. I

screamed with fright and jumped out of bed, and intended to rush along the corridor to your room, for I thought it was the middle of the night, but just as I got out of the door, at great tall man caught me in his arms, and held me like an infant though I kicked and screamed with all my might."

"Don't make such a fuss, my little beauty," said the man, one of his comrades holding a torch and laughing. "Who are you?" asked he.

"I am the Signora's maid," said I, half choking.

"Ah!" said the wretch, "you are the very little duck I wanted," and to my horror he kissed me, put me inside my chamber, and told me to put on my clothes, for he said I was very thinly clad—the horrid wretch—and he would watch that no one should hurt me,

but to be quick, for if I delayed he would come and finish my toilet for me! Only fancy."

At that moment, the vessel heeled over slightly on one side, and then evidently was under weigh, for she began to have a pitching kind of motion, that amazingly startled Anna, who was never at sea before.

Marina had been once to Genoa, and several times to Palermo, and rather liked the sea; the motion did not affect her, but it very soon increased so much, that Anna grew pale and uneasy.

Marina looked round the cabin, which was simply, but neatly fitted up with several sleeping berths, and sofas beneath.

"You had better lie down, Anna. I see that there is an inner cabin with two berths. Let us go in there; we shall be free from

intrusion, and I feel overpowered by fatigue, and I see by that watch hanging up that it is three o'clock in the morning."

Entering the private cabin, Marina and her attendant, fastened the door, and then lay down in the berths, after praying to God to preserve them in their trying situation. Marina lay down more for repose than hopes of sleep. Her terrible position was so alarming that she imagined it would keep sleep from her eyes; but wearied and worn out by the unusual excitement and exhaustion, she fell fast asleep, and only awoke when the strong light from a bull's eye in the deck above her fell full on her eyes. She started up. Anna was fast asleep, the vessel was going easily and smoothly through the water, and over her head she could hear the pacing of a heavy

foot upon the deck. At first a kind of bewilderment overpowered her, but she soon came to the full consciousness of her situation.

Anna shortly after awoke, and finding so little movement in the vessel, she got up, a little giddy perhaps, but otherwise quite well.

Marina gently opened the door and looked out into the principal cabin, to her great surprise she perceived upon one of the sofas a variety of female apparel, and on a closer inspection, Anna declared they were her mistress's own garments and boxes plundered from her chamber at the Gonzalo mansion. On the table their breakfast was prepared, and lying on a plate a folded sheet of note paper, directed to Marina, which she immediately opened. The note which contained only a few lines, was as follows:—

"I beg the Signora Gonzalo will be under no sort of apprehension of any ill-treatment or insult. To-morrow she will arrive at her destination. Till then I shall not intrude upon her.

"GIORGIO MANZANI."

"As I conjectured," said Marina, calmly, "bad as this man is, and disgraceful the outrage he has committed, I need not, beyond the act of my abduction, expect insult."

"But blessed *Madonna*! Signora, where is he going to take us? We are far away from our homes here," said Anna, setting her curls at a small mirror hanging against the side of the cabin. Anna was a very pretty girl, and her little toilet was completed to her satisfaction. She then began to turn over and fold up her young mistress's clothes, and

put them to rights, muttering to herself what hard creatures the wretches were to crumple and tumble the various things they had seized at random.

Marina, we regret to say, was not one of those romantic heroines who can subsist upon fresh air and love. She sat down calm and self possessed to breakfast. There was coffee, cold fowl, fruit, biscuits and good butter, so making Anna sit down beside her, they ate, under the circumstances, a very tolerable breakfast. After they had finished, a young lad with a very gentle expression of countenance, about fourteen years old, entered the cabin, and without uttering a word removed the tray containing the breakfast preparations.

"That's a very quiet, nice looking boy," said Anna, "to be amongst such terrible fellows as carried us off. I wonder if that

horrid man who whipped me up like a chicken last night is aboard."

"No doubt," returned Marina, with a quiet smile; "but you need not fear him. What a state my beloved mother and sister must be in," said the young girl, with a heavy sigh. "And what," she thought to herself, "would her beloved Claudio think, when, on his return to Naples, he should hear of her mysterious abduction?"

Then she thought of her dear father immured in a dreary prison, and her mind almost gave way as she allowed her sad thoughts to gain the mastery.

Thus the day passed, with some little increase of the motion of the vessel; but as the sun declined the water became perfectly smooth, for it was the season of light winds, going down with the sun, and the sea only

ruffled by the breeze whilst it lasted. The young lad brought in provisions, and cleared them away when the repast was over. Marina asked no questions; she knew how fruitless it would be, and how completely she was in the power of her persecutor.

The shades of night fell, the lamp was lighted, and shortly after Marina and her attendant retired to their little sleeping cabins, and many an hour that long heavy night, our heroine lay awake, sick at heart and almost despairing; but better thoughts and a recollection that resignation to the Divine will and a firm reliance in His mercy and His power to restore her to those who cherished and loved her rendered her calm and resigned, and towards morning she slept.

The next morning Marina knew, by the

stillness of the vessel, that they must be at anchor.

"We have arrived at our destination, wherever that may be," said Marina to her attendant, as she finished her breakfast.

"Oh, *Madonna*! signora! now we shall know what they are going to do with us," said Anna, looking no little alarmed. "Where can they have taken us to, out so far to sea?"

"We may not have gone far to sea, Anna, only perhaps along the coast; we can only surmise."

As she said the words a heavy foot descended the cabin stairs. Marina's heart beat, the door opened, and, as she expected, Giorgio Manzani, attired as a sailor, entered the cabin. Marina's cheek flushed, and she felt her blood

coursing through her veins, and her heart beating wildly. She was now face to face with her dreaded enemy.

Giorgio Manzani looked well; he was certainly a handsome man, tall, muscular, and graceful — his simple attire became him. Throwing his cap upon a sofa he sat down, and looked calmly and thoughtfully into Marina's flushed and exquisitely lovely features.

Anna grew pale and looked frightened, and seemed inclined to run and shut herself up in the little cabin, but Marina said, quietly,

"Remain where you are, Anna."

"Yes," said Giorgio Manzani, "she need not stir. What I have to say, it matters little who hears."

And fixing his eyes upon Marina he continued,

"No doubt, signora, you consider the method I have adopted of procuring a wife is an unwarrantable one, but not exactly a novel one."

"Signor Manzani," interrupted Marina, quite calmly, "your wife I will never be. If before I looked upon you with indifference, your present cowardly and cruel outrage changes indifference into contempt and hatred."

Giorgio Manzani betrayed not the slightest emotion; he merely said,

"Of course, signora, I expected such would be your feelings, when Marina Gonzalo bestowed her love upon Claudio Trepani, now a perjured traitor to his king."

Marina Gonzalo turned exceedingly pale. She said to herself, "can this man be speaking truth?"

Our readers will recollect that Marina was carried off before Captain Trepani was accused of treason; but Giorgio Manzani knew that his father and the minister of police were resolved to destroy the young commander of the "Etna" by getting him accused of being a traitor to his king, and with tampering with the loyalty of his officers and men. He, therefore, though apparently and outwardly calm, was nevertheless sensibly affected by Marina's words. Win her love he never expected, but make her his wife he would, no matter what the sacrifice or what the consequence. Revenge is as sweet to an Italian's heart as requited love.

"I see you doubt me, Marina Gonzalo, but such is the case. Help from him you can never have, for if arrested—and arrested he surely will be—his fate will be instant death."

"My trust is in God's mercy and protection," returned Marina, recovering her calm demeanour; "you neither frighten nor menace me. I am in your power at present, and great as is the wrong you have committed I still trust it will not be followed up by further insult from you or your followers."

Though somewhat surprised and nettled by Marina's calm and apparently unexpected manner, Giorgio Manzani said,

"I have told you, you shall be my wife, willingly or unwillingly; therefore you may rest satisfied no insult will be inflicted on you by anyone belonging to me. You will be landed here on an island, and I leave you the next moment, probably for a month. You will be taken to a cottage on this island, where you will find no want of comfort, I might say luxuries, and have attendants to

wait on you; but no one will intrude on you."

And rising from his seat Giorgio Manzani left the cabin.

"Oh! blessed *Madonna!*" said Anna, clasping her hands and looking into the pale but composed features of her young mistress. "How coolly that horrid man talks of putting us upon an island—the Virgin knows where this island is—and leaving us to the mercy of the wretches who carried us off."

"I hope, Anna, he will take them with him," said Marina. "I feel rather relieved now I know that our destiny is to be kept in a cottage on an island. I dreaded much worse. I avoided all exasperating language. When in the power of a heartless villain it is better to appear to bend to circumstances than offer a useless resistance. But let us go on deck."

Taking up a mantle and large veil, she threw them over her, and, followed by Anna, left the cabin. Her first glance was over the deck of the xebecque; she perceived but three or four men, simply attired in the usual dress of sailors, with neither red shirts nor red caps. They were quietly coiling away ropes and doing various other work belonging to sailors.

Giorgio Manzani was standing leaning over the bulwarks, talking to four men in the boat alongside, and ordering some cushions to be placed in the stern sheets.

The morning was exceedingly fine, a light west wind played over the calm surface of the water, whilst the sky above was guiltless of a cloud. The xebecque was lying head to wind, her sails closely furled to her long taper yards, which towered aloft. So neat

and trim were the sails furled that they looked like slender bands.

Marina gazed over the stern, and beheld the island of Melita. She did not know the name of the island, neither could she tell that the long line of coast she beheld, some six or eight miles distant, was the island of Sicily.

Giorgio Manzani approached, and with a keen look at Marina, announced that the boat was ready.

"I shall see you safe ashore;" and he led the way, offering to assist her into the boat, which was pulled towards the shore, not half a mile distant.

Marina looked at the four men pulling; but there was nothing remarkable in their looks, persons, or manners.

Anna had carefully made a bundle of her young mistress's things, and placed them in

the boat. She gave a hurried glance at the men, fearing to see her abductor, with the red beard; but he was not one of the four men, to her great relief. In a few moments the boat was pulled into a natural creek, between ranges of rock, and gently grounded upon a fine shingly beach.

Coming towards the boat Marina perceived a man and two females. The man appeared, by his attire, to be a fisherman, and the women of the same class. Two fishing boats were drawn up on the beach, and various lobster and crab pots and fishing nets were stretched drying on the rocks.

Giorgio Manzani leaped out on the beach, and taking the man and woman aside, he spoke to them for several minutes, and then returned to the boat; the men put out a plank, and Marina and Anna stepped ashore.

Giorgio Manzani then approached Marina.

"I leave you now, Signora Gonzalo, for two reasons—to give you time for thought, in the first place; secondly, I have no priests in this island; and that fair hand of yours must be mine, or—"

"Never!" said Marina, firmly. "You may clasp it in yours when the breath has left my body; but in life—never."

"Then you ring the death knoll of your whole family—condemn your father and brother to torture and death. Think of this, Marina Gonzalo, and become mine willingly, and I pledge my life I will save them all."

"Never, willingly — never!" uttered Marina, raising her eyes to heaven. "God will protect them; and neither you nor your tyrant king can harm one hair of their head, if He thinks fit to save them."

"We shall see," said the young man, with a scornful laugh; "but, willing or unwilling, you shall be the fair bride of Giorgio Manzani;" and springing into the boat, she was shoved off, and pushing out from the creek, was rowed rapidly back to the "Massaniello."

CHAPTER VIII.

Marina Gonzalo, when she beheld the boat containing Giorgio Manzani recede from the shore on which she stood, heaved a sigh of intense relief.

"Thank God!" she inwardly exclaimed, "I am relieved from his hated presence. Who can foresee what may happen in a week, perhaps a month?"

She was roused from her train of thoughts

and hopes of the future, by her attendant Anna saying, in a piteous tone,

"Blessed Mary, have pity on us! What a frightful place this is! Where is this cottage we are to live in? Ah! *Madonna*! it's scandalous!"

These words were addressed to the female, who respectfully approached them, saying,

"Signora, would you be pleased to follow us."

Marina turned round, and regarded the woman that stood before her. Her face and figure struck her particularly. She was tall, and finely formed, for the picturesque boddice of red cloth she wore showed her fine figure to advantage; her hair was glossy and black, and so were her eyes; her features were all good. Altogether, Marina considered her a very handsome woman, and

for years, not more than five-and-twenty. The man and the other woman were setting some fishing gear in the boats.

"I am ready to follow," said Marina, looking up at the stupendous cliffs, towering above them, some three hundred feet, and almost perpendicular; "but if we are to climb those rugged rocks, I fear it will be impossible."

"Oh, the path is steep, Signora; but not at all difficult, if your head is not likely to be rendered light by looking back."

The tone of the woman's voice was pleasing. She called to the man; and then he and the second woman—also young and very well looking—approached.

Marina looked at the man; he was about forty, middle height, with a dark, sun-burnt countenance; his eyes and hair dark. The

expression of his features, though they were good, was certainly not pleasing; still, the man, amongst many, would have passed unnoticed.

"I will lead the way, Signora," he said, "and the women can assist you and your attendants, should you require their services."

He then proceeded along the base of the cliffs, and Marina and Anna followed, the two women bringing up the rear, carrying Anna's bundle of garments.

After ten minutes' walking, the party turned a huge projecting cliff, and then perceived a path leading towards the summit, winding amongst the rocks; at first it was a series of steps, but after an ascent of a hundred feet, it became a regular, smooth path, easily traversed, provided the traveller had no fear

of becoming giddy from looking over the deep abysses along whose borders the path led.

Marina felt no fear. Not so Anna; the timid girl clung to the arm of the youngest of the two women, declaring that none but goats could dream of using such a track. Marina paused to rest a few moments, and leaning her back against the rock, she gazed over the sea.

As she glanced down the giddy height, and looked over the sparkling waters, she beheld the xebecque unfurling her white canvas to the breeze, and rapidly receding from the island, was steering for the coast of Sicily.

When she turned she perceived the dark, expressive eyes of the elder female fixed upon her, with a most peculiar expression, which became fixed upon the ground as Marina said,

"I feel a little fatigued; will you be kind enough, now the path is broader, to lend me the help of your arm?"

"Most willingly," said the woman; "indeed I am surprised that you have managed to come so far unassisted."

She spoke in a kind tone, and offered her arm.

"Pray," said Marina, as they moved on, the man some ten yards or so in advance, and every now and then looking back, "pray by what name shall I call you?"

"Call me Teresa," said the woman; "I am appointed to attend on you. When you reach the summit you will be surprised to find this little island is far from being such a desert, rugged spot as a first glance would lead you to suppose."

"It is not very large, I should judge," said

Marina, interested by the language and tone of Teresa, so superior to the common fishing class upon the coast of Sicily and its islands.

"No, Signora, it is scarcely five miles in circumference. You will see the land of Sicily presently, and the other islands scattered about those seas."

"Are you a single or married woman?" questioned Marina.

"I am a widow, Signora," and Marina thought her voice trembled. "That man before us," and her voice sunk to a whisper, "is my intended husband."

Marina looked up, and started, for the dark eyes of Teresa flashed, and her face flushed, as the man, who was some paces in front, turned round, and paused till they came up.

Anna's little organ of speech, in the meantime, was by no means idle. She was, at

times, greatly frightened, and clung to her companion firmly.

"It's a scandalous thing!" she exclaimed, "to kidnap us and bring us to this horrible rock, fit only for goats; and, indeed, I can't see how even a goat could live here—there's nothing to eat."

"Oh! yes," said the woman, with a laugh; "you will have plenty to eat; and you will see numbers of goats, and they also have abundance to eat; they give us butter and milk."

"Which, I suppose," said Anna, "we shall be condemned to eat and drink—horrid!"

"No," said the woman; "the butter, though white, is as sweet and nice as cows' butter, and the milk nearly as good as cream."

"Are there many more people on the island?" questioned Anna.

"Well, perhaps six or seven women, four or five men, and some children."

"Holy Mary! How do you all live?" said Anna.

"Oh! you will see; we have fruit and new wine from our grapes; plenty of fish, lobsters, and crabs, and young kid in season, and wild fowl in winter; so, you see, this is not such a bad place to pass the rest of your life in, after all."

"Rest of my life in!" said Anna, hysterically.

She thought of her lover, a smart young sailor, snug in the "Etna," and the words of the woman struck her with horror.

"Ah! *Madonna*!" she exclaimed, "sooner than live here I would pitch myself over these cliffs. Do you know who brought us here?"

"I must not answer or speak to you at all," said the woman, sharply, "if you ask me any questions of that kind; but see, here we are at the top."

As they stood upon the summit, Marina Gonzalo gazed around her with considerable surprise. They were on the highest pinnacle of the island, and could, at one glance, take in its entire extent; gazing over the surface of the island, a magnificent view of the beautiful land of Sicily was visible, Mount Etna towering to the sky, with a long line of smoke ascending from its then burning crater.

Beneath them appeared a remarkably beautiful valley, of limited extent, certainly, but abounding in patches of pasture, fruit trees, olive trees, and a variety of evergreen shrubs, and large patches of vines on trellises; around them the rocks were covered

with a singular variety of wild flowers, and small myrtle trees; with numbers of goats, quite tame, were browsing upon the various plants, springing up on every side between crevices, and patches of wild vetches. Many of the goats, with their playful kids, came bounding over the rocks, rubbing their heads against the women, to attract their attention.

It was a boundless view of a vast extent of ocean, dotted here and there with the white sails of the various rigged vessels that navigate those waters.

"We appear to have landed," said Marina, turning towards Teresa, "on the most inaccessible part of this singular island, and I see no habitations."

"Oh! Signora, there is a hill between us and the second valley, where our cottages

are; it looks flat from this height, but it is not so; as to landing elsewhere than where you did would be difficult, if not impossible; the cliffs are high and perfectly perpendicular, and the ranges of sunken rocks innumerable, whilst a ground sea almost always runs in on these shores."

"May I inquire who owns the island?" said Marina.

"Oh! it belongs to the crown, Signora; formerly it belonged to the noble family of Trepani."

Marina looked surprised.

"Who possessed large estates in Sicily. The crown siezed them, for what I don't know; but the old Marchese Trepani, when the pestilence swept away half the people in Naples and Sicily, built a very pretty villa on this island, lived here, and planted gar-

dens, in fact, all the plantations about the valleys—orange trees, fig trees, and almond and peach, as you will see when you enter the other valley; but the island went to the crown, and a Signor Manzani, of Naples, either bought the island, or got possession of it somehow."

"We had better move on, Signora," said the man, joining them; "we have more than a mile to go to reach the cottage, and the Signora must be tired."

Marina, as she looked up, thought that there was a dark scowl on the man's face, as he cast a look at Teresa; but the young woman's features retained their quiet, unconcerned expression. It struck Marina, as she at times contrived to let her eyes rest upon her face unobserved, that there was the expression of some deep sorrow concealed in

her heart, which she tried to hide; and yet she was about, she said, to be married, and to the man who, just the moment before, looked at her almost savagely.

"Who are these people?" Marina asked herself as they descended the hill. "People willing to serve Giorgio Manzani," was the only answer she could give herself.

As they gained the valley below, the surrounding scenery became positively beautiful, though limited in extent; yet it was evident that great taste and considerable expense had been expended upon the cultivation and adornment of the little valley they then entered. After surmounting another thickly planted eminence, she perceived the habitation which Teresa pointed out to her; but, instead of a simple cottage, she beheld an extremely pretty villa residence, one story high, with

projecting roof, and verandahs all round; it was standing on a sloping lawn, and in the midst of gardens and orange groves, with the front to the south, commanding a most splendid view of the coast of Sicily, as far as the eye could take in.

"And so," said Marina to herself, "this is the villa, and here, no doubt, is the island where Claudio Trepani and his sister Ida were born. How strange that I should be brought here, a prisoner to his bitterest enemy!"

Passing through an avenue covered by trellis-work, over which grew vines with clusters of grapes hanging above their heads, they came to the front door of the villa. The windows and door were closed, and the blinds down.

"I will go round, Signora," said the man;

"I have only the key of the back door; I will open the front one to admit you."

"The house is well ventilated and aired," said Teresa to our heroine, as the man disappeared round the angle of the building.

"*Santa Madonna!* Signora," said the amazed Anna to her young mistress, "what a beautiful place to build on such a little island."

Teresa, watching an opportunity as Anna went to examine something that attracted her, said in a low voice to Marina,

"Signora, be not afraid; I understand your situation; be silent and, please the *Madonna*! we shall both have our revenge." The noise of the drawing of bolts and unlocking of doors caused Teresa to move some paces off, as the door swung open "I will

just draw up the blinds and open some of the windows, Signora," she said, entering the villa; "you can rest yourself for a few moments on the seat under the verandah."

Teresa and the other woman entered the villa; and Marina, certainly no little fatigued, surprised and startled by the words of Teresa, sat down, pondering over her strange situation. Marina felt considerable relief as she thought over Teresa's strange words. *She*, then, had reason to hate Giorgio Manzani; but for what? She was, as she said herself, a widow, and about to wed a man who evidently looked upon her with suspicion. Marina could have no clue to unravel this mystery; but our readers, we trust, recollect the scene and incidents described in our opening chapter. Teresa was the wife of the doomed victim to the laws of the sea robbers; the man who

was shot dead by Giorgio Manzani, the mysterious captain of this organised band of *Ladri de Mare.* Phillipo Vanti, her intended husband, was the man who betrayed the father of her child, and Teresa at the time vowed a terrible revenge.

At the expiration of a quarter of an hour, Teresa came to conduct our heroine into the interior of the villa. Phillipo Vanti was standing in the saloon, which was a very handsome one, and tastefully furnished; there was a piano and heaps of music, a handsome bookcase containing a goodly collection of volumes—what they were Marina could not say, but she was rejoiced to see them—and a guitar hanging against the wall, though there were no strings to it.

"Signora," said Phillipo Vanti, fixing his eyes upon Marina's beautiful face, "you now

see your abode ; you are not restricted in any way—can ramble over the island at any hour you please. A woman will be here presently, who will remain in the house to wait on you; and Teresa and this young woman," pointing to the second female, " will attend to your wants, and bring every day whatever provisions you require—that is, such as can be procured on the island. You can have fish and poultry, eggs, and for meat we have sheep and young kids ; but that is all. You have seen abundance of fruit ; therefore, though you may find this island solitary, you will not suffer otherwise," and, with a low bow, Phillipo Vanti retired, the two women following him.

"Well, I protest, Signora," said Anna, who stood staring at Phillipo Vanti with intense surprise, "if this is not quite a

romance. I wonder why that young woman with the dark eyes and such beautiful black hair did not stay, or even the other young woman ; I liked their looks. I wonder if there are any more men on the island. It's a beautiful villa, however."

"It's all very strange, Anna," said Marina, "but it's a gilded prison. Away from the island, I fear it will be difficult to get. No vessels touch here, and no doubt a very careful watch will be kept over us, though we may not be able to see the watchers."

Several days passed. Marina Gonzalo and her attendant became settled in their certainly extremely comfortable prison ; but the female, a middle-aged woman, who slept in the house, and cooked for them, was a very different person from Teresa. Marina never thought of asking her any questions ; but

Anna, who fidgetted about the house and loved to talk, tried to speak with her several times, but the woman, who was called Agnes, very quietly said,

"You had better mind your own business, and leave me to mind mine. I shall answer no questions, except those appertaining to my attendance upon your mistress."

Teresa and Phillipo Vanti called once every day to enquire if Marina was comfortable, or required anything beyond what she had; Marina said she was perfectly satisfied. Teresa never came alone, and not another person did they see on the island, though, after a few days, Marina and her attendant took long rambles over the valley and to the cliff hanging over the sea. Many vessels passed close to the island, so close that our heroine could distinguish the sailors upon the

decks. Thus passed a fortnight, without an incident of any kind disturbing the usual every day life on the island. Marina, though a devoted lover of music, never touched the piano or guitar, though she found abundance of strings for the latter ; she read some hours in the evening, but her thoughts, and painful ones they were, chiefly employed her time.

This tranquillity was not to last. One morning—it was the sixteenth of her residence on the island—she was gazing out of the window of her bedroom upon the purple hills of Sicily, and the quiet sea, dotted with numerous ships, when she perceived Phillipo Vanti and four men following him, walking rapidly up towards the house. She had not yet breakfasted, or left her room, and Anna had just then come in from her chamber to assist in her simple toilette ; in fact, to chatter

about nothing for half an hour, for Marina required no assistance.

"Bless me!" said Anna, as she beheld the five men hurrying up the avenue, "where did those men come from so suddenly, and what makes them walk in such a rapid manner?—what has happened?"

"Nothing very particular, I should think," said Marina; "though they do look in a hurry. Where could those men have come from? However, they are all gone round to the back entrance."

Presently the woman Agnes came and tapped at the door, saying that Phillipo Vanti wished to see the Signora in the breakfast parlour.

"Blessed *Madonna*! something has happened, I am sure," said Anna.

Marina, thinking so too, left her chamber, and proceeded to the breakfast parlour.

Phillipo Vanti looked heated, agitated, and sullen; his voice, as he addressed Marina, trembled either with agitation or passion.

"Signora Gonzalo, I have to ask you, are you concerned in this treacherous affair? for—"

"What treacherous affair?" interrupted Marina, with a flushed cheek. "I know of no treacherous affair, except the vile and cruel outrage that tore me, a helpless girl, from the protection of my parents and my home."

"I am not talking of that, Signora," returned Vanti. "Do you not know that Teresa has, by some inconceivable means, escaped from the island?"

"Escaped!" repeated Marina, a feeling of

hope and joy springing up in her heart. "Why, was Teresa a prisoner, like myself?" and she looked fixedly into the dark face of the man, whose features worked with passion.

"Prisoner or no prisoner, she has left the island; half the night and since daylight this morning we have hunted every part of the island, and she is not to be found. I do not say you aided her or even knew of her escape, but I ask of you—and I should think you would scorn a lie—did any private conversation take place between you and her on the morning you landed on this island? did she say anything out of the common course of conversation?"

"I am not subject to be questioned," said Marina, haughtily, "except by my parents. What Teresa said to me, did not refer to any intended escape. If she has left the island, I

knew nothing of her intention, and decline any more conversation on the subject."

"Be it so, Signora," returned Vanti, passionately. "I feel satisfied she has thrown out some hint respecting her intentions, though you conceal it; but let me tell you, if she has got away from the island, it will not alter your destiny, only precipitate it," and turning, he left the chamber, slamming the door after him, in his passion.

Marina remained, with flushed cheek, so excited and agitated had she become from the insolence of Phillipo Vanti. Anna came in, whilst her mistress still stood gazing abstractedly at the door.

"Well," said Anna, "that villain Vanti has been threatening you—you, the daughter of a noble gentleman; I heard him. Ah! if Captain Trepani was within arm's length, he

would have struck the villain to the ground and tossed him out of the boudoir," and Anna's pretty youthful features wore a look of vexation and indignation. "It's too bad; but, dear mistress, Teresa is actually gone, got away, and Agnes is savage with rage, and says we shall pay for our treachery—horrid creature!"

"What are the people on this island?" said Marina, shaking off her abstraction. "It appears that Teresa was a prisoner like ourselves, though she told me she was to marry this man Vanti; all she said to me was, she understood my situation, and that we should be avenged."

"*Madonna!* did she say that," said Anna; "do you know, Signora," and she sunk her voice to a whisper, "do you know, I think these people on the island are sea robbers—

Ladri di Mare—and that Giorgio Manzani is their captain, and the vessel we came in here is a pirate."

Marina started and turned pale.

"Good heavens! what has put that idea into your head, Anna?"

"I will tell you, Signora; you know I am rather curious; I like to find out anything that looks mysterious. To be next to you, Signora, I took the little room opening from your chamber into it; in this room is a large closet, which my inquisitiveness found out was once a passage into the kitchen, but boarded off. I thought I often heard the sound of voices rather close after going to bed, which surprised me, for I always thought Agnes had no visitors after nightfall. You will say, Signora, that I am very curious; but knowing that we are prisoners, I thought

it quite fair to hear all our enemies had to say. I examined the closet, and found that only a few boards separated it from the kitchen; so last night, when I heard Agnes talking, and knowing that no one ought to be in the house at that hour but herself, I got up in the dark and went into the closet quite softly, and saw that light came through the joining of the boards, and on moving my dress, that was hanging on a peg, I saw a great chink in the division, through which I could see right into the kitchen, where I heard the two persons talking. I looked through, and saw Agnes and a strange woman sitting by the long table, who were earnestly conversing. For several minutes I could understand nothing of their conversation, it seemed so strange; till at last, I made out a sentence that frightened me."

"And what was that sentence, Anna?" demanded Marina, anxiously.

"Why," Agnes said, 'don't you know Catalina,' addressing the other woman, 'that there are ten barrels of gunpowder in the vaults under this house, and that it can be blown into the air in one minute.' "

"When I heard this," continued Anna, "I felt myself shake with fear; only fancy our sleeping over ten barrels of gunpowder!"

"It's not particularly pleasant," said Marina, thoughtfully, ; "but I do not see any reason for blowing up this villa. Did you hear anything else?"

"Yes," returned Anna, "the strange woman said, 'I know that sooner than let our spoils in the caves fall into any other hands, they would be blown up; but why we should blow this house up, puzzles me.'

"'Because,' said Agnes, 'our brothers and husbands have sworn, if ever this island is discovered to be the hiding place of our associates, and that the stores of the sea robbers are here concealed; when those who have gained the secret, have landed and assembled, as they surely will, in this house, then one of our band is sworn and selected by lot, even if he sacrifices himself, to fire the train laid in the vaults under us, and blow our enemies into the air.'

"*Madonna!* Signora, I went trembling to bed. I felt we were in the hands of sea robbers, and should anyone come to rescue us, we should be blown into the air with our prisoners."

"Not now we know it, Anna," replied Marina; "but I think, like you, that these men who carried us off are sea robbers, and

that this Giorgio Manzani, extraordinary as it may seem, is their chief; and this is the secret of the sudden rise of the Manzani family into wealth and importance."

CHAPTER IX.

We left the "Etna," after the rescue of the Count Gonzalo, pursuing her voyage to Genoa; it was the intention of our hero, after landing the Count, to call his officers and men together, and give them the choice of either joining the deliverers of Sicily, or continue their allegiance to the Bourbons. In the latter case, he would land those who declined to follow his own example, on the Sicilian coast, or put them aboard some

vessel proceeding to Naples. He felt, however, quite convinced, that to a man they would desert the cause of the Bourbons.

As to himself, whatever had been his previous resolves, he now determined to abandon the service of a king who, if he himself was guiltless, at all events permitted his ministers to exercise the most atrocious tyranny and injustice to those victims they selected, either from political motives, or personal interest and hatred.

The cruelty exercised against his intended father-in-law enraged and disgusted him, and broke the last link of the chain that bound him to the service of a mis-led king. He had submitted to his father's misfortunes, the confiscation of his estates, the loss of title, and the false accusation against himself; but when he beheld the emaciated form of Marina's

father, saw the horrible dungeon to which he was condemned, and that even torture was to be administered to him, whilst his faithful and attached secretary had been seized and tortured, to exact a false accusation against his lord, he forswore the service of the Neapolitan King, and vowed to join those who sought to free Naples and Sicily from a detested tyranny.

His first intention, on leaving the bay of Naples, was to proceed to Genoa; but on consulting with his lieutenant and the Count Gonzalo, who trembled for the safety of his wife and daughters (he was kept ignorant of Marina's abduction), he resolved to return during the night and land, take the Countess and Bianca on board, and instead of proceeding to Genoa, make for Marsala, on the Sicilian coast, where Garibaldi first landed, and there put the Count and family

ashore. This idea pleased the Count Gonzalo, who stated that as soon as he gained strength, he would join Garibaldi in Palermo, and fight by his side for the freedom of his native land.

There was one circumstance that caused Claudio Trepani some uneasiness; he had only twelve hours' coal. Should the "Serena," a very fast frigate, persist in pursuing him, his chance of escape would be doubtful, for though the "Etna" was remarkably fast, she was still a very small vessel, compared to the finest frigate in the Neapolitan navy. But during the night and the next day, the breeze completely lulled, so that the "Etna" could, under steam, in a few hours be beyond all pursuit. The Count Gonzalo was so reduced by suffering and the fearful imprisonment he had undergone, that a long time would elapse

before his strength could be restored. Finding he was not pursued, Trepani ordered the "Etna's" fires to be reduced, and under easy sail, she stood in for the coast, till night set in. A careful look out was kept during the day, but as the sun set, steam was got up, and she shaped her course for the Gonzalo Villa, arriving there about two hours before midnight.

Trepani and his lieutenant, and a dozen well armed men, landed at once, and proceeded from the beach towards the mansion. Our hero had some suspicion that the Minister of Police, enraged at his escape from Naples, might suspect his intention of visiting the Gonzalo Mansion, and carrying off the Countess and his family from his tryanny, should he seek to revenge himself upon the females of the family he detested.

The night was a dark one, with heavy clouds overhead; the breeze had died away. No sound disturbed the silence around them save the tramp of the men's feet on the loose gravel of the walks. Just as they approached the mansion, a strong glare of livid blue light suddenly rendered every object around clear and distinct. Before Trepani could utter a word — for he at once conjectured that their landing was expected, and that the Count Gonzalo's mansion was occupied by his enemies—before, therefore, he could do more than lay his hand upon his lieutenant's arm a volley of musketry was levelled from the balconies of the house right upon him and his followers. Lieut. Gonzalo staggered and fell; the next instant the light became extinguished, and all again was immersed in darkness.

A cry of rage burst from the lips of the furious seamen; three of their comrades had fallen either dead or mortally wounded. Capt. Trepani was about to rush up the avenue and attempt to force an entrance, when again a volley of musketry tore up the gravel around them, and wounded several of the men; to attempt to storm the house appeared an act of madness, for our hero felt assured, judging by the volley from the windows, that the force inside the house was double theirs, if not treble. He resolved to return on board, and land with thirty or forty men, again force the doors and drive the enemy out. Giving his arm to his lieutenant, who had regained his feet, stating he was not severely wounded, he ordered his men to assist the wounded, and they returned to the beach.

"We were expected, that's evident," said Lieutenant Gonzalo; "they sent an armed force to shoot us down, if we attempted a landing. What will my poor mother and sister do? Doubtless they have been sent to Naples."

"I had a kind of presentiment of this," said Claudio Trepani, bitterly. "It was likely enough to imagine, if the father was rescued, we should be loth to leave the rest of the family to be dealt with as their enemies pleased."

"This is a sad affair, indeed," returned the lieutenant, "three of our poor fellows killed outright, and four others more or less severely wounded."

"Where are you hit?" questioned Captain Trepani; "I trust your wound is not severe."

"No; the ball merely grazed the left tem-

ple. It stunned me, but only raised the skin. It was a near touch."

They reached the boats. The wounded men were assisted in, and then they gave way for the brig. For fear of any *contretemps* Captain Trepani had ordered the men aboard to be ready armed, and prepared to land; therefore, in a few minutes, the long boat and cutter were in the water, and with thirty additional hands, they were urged towards the shore, burning to avenge the deaths of their comrades. Lieutenant Gonzalo had hastily dressed the slight wound he had received, and feeling intensely anxious, insisted on accompanying his commander to the attack of the mansion.

Dividing his men, and taking advantage of the thick shrubberies, Claudio Trepani advanced towards the mansion. But they

reached the flight of steps leading to the principal entrance without the slightest molestation, and to their great surprise found the doors open, and the house silent and apparently deserted.

"They have left the house," said Captain Trepani to his lieutenant, and ordered the men who carried the dark lanterns to uncover the lights. This the men did, and all gazed anxiously around. A scene of devastation met their view. The great hall of the Gonzalo mansion a remarkably handsome one, had contained four very beautifully-executed statues by Canova, and other works of art. All were smashed to pieces and lay scattered over the floor. Several valuable oil paintings were pulled from the walls, and ruthlessly torn to shreds, and the chairs and marble tables also smashed and

strewed about. Captain Trepani and Lieutenant Gonzalo gazed at this cruel and vindictive outrage with feelings of deep resentment and regret; but the young lieutenant's chief thoughts rested upon his mother and sister. Where were they?—for every room in the house had been treated in the same manner—costly pictures, rich hangings, Turkey carpets, all ruined and destroyed, and covered with pieces and fragments of magnificent mirrors.

Every available article of plunder—silver and gold, rich cabinets, with their contents—was carried off. There was not an article of furniture left whole.

"This is the work of private vengeance," said Lieutenant Gonzalo. "They have done their fiendish work well; but where can my poor, heart-broken mother and sister be

taken to? Surely the Government would hardly imprison females."

"Perhaps they have taken refuge in the city with my sister Ida," said the enraged commander of the "Etna." "They may have left before the mansion was taken possession of."

"I tell you what, Claudio, I will do. I am too anxious to again return on board without gaining some knowledge of my mother's and sister's fate. I will change garments with one of our men, and proceed to Naples. I shall pass unmolested. There is nothing remarkable about me."

"It's a great risk, nevertheless, Gonzalo," said our hero, thoughtfully. "For, if you escape the Argus eyes of the police, how will you manage to rejoin me?"

"Easily enough," returned the Lieutenant.

"As soon as I ascertain or gain any intelligence of my family, I will embark as a sailor aboard some felucca sailing for Palermo. Garibaldi has possession of the city by this time, though the fleet may still remain off the port. You, of course, will go direct to Marsala. I will join my father there. But how will you proceed on reaching that port?"

"I must be guided by circumstances," returned Claudio Trepani. "The only use the 'Etna' would be to Garibaldi, would be to bring stores, arms, and volunteers to Sicily. My most ardent wish—in fact, my whole thoughts—are centered upon one thing—to discover the fate of Marina."

"Ah! my poor sister," said the Lieutenant; "depend on it that villain, Giorgio Manzani, has her in his power; but a day of reckoning will come."

Gonzalo then exchanged his uniform for a simple sailor's attire, and bidding adieu to his commander, he soon disappeared in the gloom of the night.

Having nothing further to detain him, Claudio Trepani and his men returned aboard the "Etna," after placing his dead in the hall of the mansion, covering them with a cloth, knowing that when seen they would receive Christian burial. It was a still, calm, night, not very clear, and on gaining the deck of the brig the anchor was got up, sail made, and their course shaped for the coast of Sicily. It was a contrary breeze; but with only a few hours' coal, Captain Trepani preferred not using steam unless pressed by some emergency. Just as he was descending into the cabin to break the unwelcome intelligence to the Count of not finding the

Countess in the mansion, a rocket, seaward, shot up into the air. He paused a moment, for as the rocket rushed through the air, he could distinguish it was sent from the deck of a large ship. The next moment, to the east and west, two brilliant blue lights were shown from the decks of two vessels, not a mile from the "Etna." All aboard the "Etna" almost simultaneously cried out, "The 'Serena' and the gun brig 'Stromboli!'" the latter a sailing craft, same size as the "Etna," and commanded by Captain Andrea Gargetti, a nephew of the Prime Minister, and a man almost universally disliked in the Neapolitan navy. Both vessels were under sail, and the moment the "Etna" became visible, both the frigate and the brig altered their course, and steered for the "Etna."

"Ha! *per Bacco*!" said our hero to Giuseppe Carraro, his engineer, "we must get up steam at once; they have caught us in a trap, but this light land wind gives us a great advantage. However, we shall have to exchange broadsides with the 'Stromboli.'"

In a few minutes the "Etna" was prepared for a chance encounter. All were at their posts, the guns elevated, so as to spare life aboard the "Stromboli," but disable her from pursuing. The "Etna" was then steered direct for the brig, the rapidly-increasing dawn rendering every object distinct. The "Serena" frigate, under a cloud of canvass, was making way in the light breeze, and already the thunder of her cannon was heard as she opened fire upon the "Etna," but without effect. Steering right for the "Stromboli," the steam not yet up, the two vessels

were in a very few minutes within musket shot, when the "Stromboli," putting her helm down, poured a broadside into the "Etna." Captain Trepani was prepared for this, and, excepting a few splinters knocked from her starboard bulwarks, and some running rigging cut, and two of the men wounded, no harm was done. Before the "Stromboli" recovered her position, a heavy broadside from the "Etna's" guns, fired at less than pistol shot, left her with only her lower masts standing, thus leaving her quite incapable of pursuit. But even this short delay brought the "Serena" frigate dangerously near, for a well directed fire knocked away the "Etna's" fore topmast and badly injured the main topmast and yards, besides killing two men and wounding several. Fortunately, by this time, the "Etna's"

steam was up, and before a second broadside could be discharged the gun brig rapidly gathered way, and the wind suddenly lulling the frigate was unable to manœuvre, so that the crew of the "Etna," enraged at the death of their comrades, could not be restrained from sending a broadside from their heavy guns into the frigate's side.

As they afterwards learned, this broadside inflicted a dangerous leak, which forced the frigate to give up the pursuit, and to run her guns over to port, so as to release the injured side.

The "Etna," delivered from her dangerous enemy, steamed full speed from the land, so that in four hours the coast of Naples was hid from sight. Having temporarily repaired damages, and a strong breeze springing up, the fires were damped down, and under sail

her course was shaped for the northward coast of Sicily. Just as the sun rose the Sicilian hills were in sight, some twenty miles distant. The breeze then fell, and shortly after a light air from the Sicilian coast sprung up.

Captain Trepani, after a couple of hours' repose, proceeded on deck. He had the previous night sat with the Count Gonzalo for an hour; he was sadly grieved and shocked at the uncertainty of his wife's and daughter's fate. He scarcely knew what to think or imagine; he also trembled for his son's safety.

The risk was fearful in venturing to Naples. Our hero said and did all he could to ease the Count's mind. He and his faithful secretary were slowly mending, but he still suffered terribly from rheumatism in all his limbs, from the horrible damp of the dungeon in which he had been cruelly immured.

On gaining the deck Trepani perceived that the wind was extremely light and contrary. There were a number of vessels to be seen, but no vessel of war. As he fixed his glass upon the several crafts in sight, his attention was caught by a very large and handsome three masted xebecque, working to windward under three tremendous lateen sails. She was not more than a mile distant, and though the wind was light she appeared to go remarkably fast through the water. He felt a great desire to overhaul the stranger; therefore, having the advantage of position, he ordered the "Etna" to be kept away, so as to cross the xebecque in her course. Keeping his glass fixed upon her the xebecque suddenly tacked, and as she did so he gained a full view of her figure head.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Captain of the

"Etna," "it is the 'Massaniello.' If this should be the vessel that carried off my betrothed!"

They were now within half-a-mile of her, but she evidently sailed in the light wind faster than the "Etna." So a gun was fired across her fore foot, and the Neapolitan colours hoisted. Still the xebecque added more sail, and was increasing her distance.

Our hero felt loth to fire into her; there were many "Massaniellos" in the Neapolitan merchant service, and this might not be the one he suspected. He was unable to raise his screw, for a round shot from the "Serena" had damaged the lifting chains; there was no time to get up steam, for he was without coal. At last he gave orders to fire high and bring down one of her lofty lateen sails.

A gunner, remarkable for being a good marksman, pointed the gun; before the roar of the twenty-four pounder had well died away the great main yard of the xebecque was knocked in two, and the immense folds of the sail lumbered its deck.

All aboard the "Etna" knew of the outrage committed upon the Gonzalo family by the crew of a vessel called the "Massaniello," therefore a hearty cheer followed the fall of the xebecque's main yard, for all hoped that the vessel they were pursuing was the "Massaniello" sought for.

In twenty minutes the "Etna" was hove to within thirty yards of the crippled xebecque, and Captain Trepani ordered his gig to be lowered. Into this he got with a young midshipman and four seamen, and in a few minutes was alongside the xebecque.

The crew of the "Massaniello" were grouped upon the deck, having hauled in the folds of their huge sail. They appeared to be all young, robust, active men. Walking the after part of the deck was a man our hero took to be the skipper. He was a tall broad shouldered man, with fierce red whiskers and moustache, and with a savage expression of countenance. He looked fiercely at Captain Trepani as he sprang lightly upon the deck of the xebecque and turned towards the skipper.

"For what reason did you fire into this vessel?" he exclaimed passionately; "a peacable merchant craft. You have disabled my ship, and shall pay for it."

"Speak less intemperately," said the commander of the "Etna," "and I will answer you. Why did you not heave to, when a

shot was fired across your fore foot, when you perceived it was fired from a vessel of war, with Neapolitan colours flying.''

"I know your vessel to be the 'Etna' gun brig, formerly belonging to the King of Naples; but when I left Naples it was very well known that the captain and crew of the 'Etna' were in rebellion against the king, had attacked the prison of Ischia, and carried off state captives. I cannot, therefore, see that I was bound to heave-to at your summons."

Claudio Trepani looked at the speaker; then very quietly said,

"I shall examine your vessel, because I have my suspicions that you are not a simple merchant craft."

The man changed colour, exclaiming,

"Oh! you can examine my papers; they

are all right. *Sacristie!* what do you take us for?"

"*Ladri di Mare!*" returned Captain Trepani, fixing his gaze upon the skipper, as he took his papers from a tin case.

Our hero could perceive his hand shook as he drew the papers forth, and his dark eyes flashed as he handed them to him.

"*Ladri di Mare!*" he repeated. "*Corpo di Demonio!* what next?"

Captain Trepani took the papers and looked them over; he had no desire to commit an arbitrary act, still, he felt convinced in his own mind that this was the identical "Massaniello" that carried off Marina Gonzalo. The papers stated the vessel to be the "Massaniello," bound in ballast from Naples to Palermo, the *padrone*, Antonio Grandi, with a crew of nine men and a boy.

"You have no passengers?"

"Not on my papers," returned the skipper; "but I picked up a man from a boat in the bay, as I was running out."

"I must see your passenger," returned our hero, walking over to the companion.

Just as he began descending the stairs he perceived a man coming up; he drew back. The stranger ascended, and stood upon the deck of the xebecque.

Captain Trepani's cheek and temple flushed as he exclaimed,

"Giorgio Manzani, we have met at last!"

"And yet we have never met before, Claudio Trepani. Is there anything extraordinary in my taking a passage in this xebecque to Palermo?"

Now, though Captain Trepani knew Manzani by sight, they had never exchanged a word.

He knew he was a suitor for the hand of Marina Gonzalo, and though without proof he felt satisfied that he was the abductor of his cherished betrothed.

Manzani had always hated Trepani, because, in the first place, he knew he was a favoured rival, and next, though without fortune, that he was of the best blood in the kingdom of Naples ; and, also, that were it not for his father's intrigues poisoning the ear of the King, his title and estates would have been restored to him ; he himself, though heir to great wealth, was, nevertheless, only the great-grandson of a collector of old junk.

As Captain Trepani gazed at the man who had committed so foul a wrong, all his fierce passion became roused.

"I accuse you, Giorgio Manzani," he exclaimed, trying to keep calm, "of carrying

off the Signora Marina Gonzalo from her father's mansion, and this is the vessel, and perhaps the crew, that aided you in that daring outrage."

"What proof," returned Manzani, sternly, "have you for making so false an accusation? I can say, upon my oath, that I am not the abductor of the Signora Gonzalo, and I can prove to you—for I have, of course, heard of this abduction—that at the time it was committed I was more than two hundred miles from the city of Naples," and, taking a pocket-book from his breast, he selected a paper, on which was a large consular seal. "If you will cast your eyes over that document, Signor Trepani, you will perceive that you have committed a foul wrong in accusing me of this crime."

Trepani took the papers, somewhat stag-

gered by the calm, serious manner and countenance of his enemy, and read it.

It stated that the Signor Giorgio Manzani was called upon by the Neapolitan Consul at Modos to give evidence as to the identity of one Marco Fanelli, skipper of a Neapolitan xebecque named the "St. Elmo."

He had accordingly appeared and testified to the identity of the skipper of the "St. Elmo," who was then permitted to proceed to sea.

This, on regarding the dates, proved that Giorgio Manzani was in Modos at the very time Marina Gonzalo was carried off.

Trepani was bewildered; he knew the Neapolitan Consul at Modos extremely well, and recognised his signature.

"It may be so," observed our hero, after a moment's pause, "that you were not per-

sonally engaged in the carrying off of the Signora Gonzalo ; but I feel satisfied—"

He paused, for at that moment, owing to the set of the current and the want of wind, the "Etna" was falling alongside the xebecque.

Captain Trepani was about to give some orders to those aboard the "Etna," when a fearful, piercing shriek, and a cry for help, came up from the fore-hatch of the "Massaniello." It was a woman's shriek.

Trepani's cheek blanched, but he sprang forward to descend the hatch. The skipper of the xebecque dashed at him with two of the men, to arrest his steps; but Captain Trepani struck the skipper to the deck, and leaped down the hatchway just as Manzani levelled a pistol at him ; the ball entering his

shoulder, but scarcely noticed by him. The next instant, the "Etna" came in collision, and a young officer and several of the crew leaped aboard; they heard the cry for help, and witnessed the act of firing the pistol at their commander.

"Malediction!" furiously exclaimed the skipper of the xebecque. "All's lost. Revenge is still mine!" and he plunged down the main-hatchway.

Giorgio Manzani and the crew of the xebecque stood appalled; the men of the "Etna" in another moment would have boarded the xebecque, when she exploded with a fearful crash, hurling destruction upon those upon the deck of the xebecque, and driving her planks and timbers far over the still waters.

CHAPTER X.

When Captain Trepani sprung down the fore-hatch of the "Massaniello," he was hit in the left shoulder by a pistol ball, but he scarcely felt the wound, so greatly was he excited, for he thought it possible that the shriek came from Marina Gonzalo. As he alighted on the floor of the cabin, he perceived a woman covered with blood, flowing from a deep gash in her throat, struggling desperately with a man, who was seeking to stab her again; the man was trying to free his hand, in which he

grasped a long-handled knife. This assassin he struck to the floor of the cabin, and caught the woman in his arms; before he could even lay her down, or look about him, the xebecque blew up with a terrible crash; he felt himself and the female lifted, knocked against the deck, and then he became insensible.

When recollection returned, and he could recognise objects, he at once perceived that he was lying on a sofa in his own cabin, and that his surgeon and one of his officers were stripping off his burnt and soaked garments.

"Thank God!" said the surgeon, who was much attached to his commander. "You have had a miraculous escape; not a limb broken, and scarcely a scratch; there's a ball in your left shoulder, which can be easily extracted," and then he handed Claudio Trepani a cordial, which he drank off, feeling won-

derfully revived. After a few moments he was able to speak, and then, after mentally thanking God for his wonderful escape, he said,

"Was there a woman saved?—any of our crew killed or hurt?"

"The woman is alive, but speechless. I have sewed up the gash in her throat," answered the surgeon. "She was with you and picked up senseless. Three of your crew perished, I deeply regret to say, and seven are more or less hurt; two of the xebecque's crew were hurled aboard our ship, cruelly burnt; neither, I fear, will live. Our side is nearly knocked out, and our rigging blown to rags, with loss of topmasts and funnel. Our escape was surprising; only that the force of the explosion was chiefly through the starboard side of the xebecque, we should have been sunk."

Trepani had himself propped up, saying,

"If you can extract the ball from my shoulder, I shall be on my legs in half-an-hour. I hear the pumps going."

"Yes," said the first mate, "the carpenters are busy nailing planks along our side. We have heeled the brig over two or three planks."

Our hero then enquired how the Count and his domestic bore the shock.

The Count Gonzalo was still so feeble as to be confined to his couch; and his attendant was little better. He had experienced great alarm, and was shaken out of his berth; but his chief uneasiness was for Captain Trepani not for himself.

An hour after this conversation the ball was extracted, and the wound bound up, and Claudio Trepani felt himself quite able to

proceed on deck, after paying a visit to the Count, whom he completely re-assured.

It wanted about an hour to sunset, as he gained the deck of the "Etna." At a glance he perceived what a wonderful escape the vessel had; and had there been a fresh breeze or a rough sea, she must have gone down; but by heeling her over to port at once—by shifting guns, ballast, and boats, the carpenters were able to nail planks across the leaks, and caulk them.

On examination of the funnel, it was perceived that it could be replaced sufficiently well to get up steam, by sawing up the broken yards and masts.

Captain Trepani was exceedingly anxious to hear what the female had to say; how she came aboard the xebecque, and why they attempted to murder her. It was very evi-

dent to him that the crew of the xebecque knew that her evidence would betray them. The sudden and terrible fate that had overtaken Giorgio Manzani, and the extraordinary act of the crew, blowing themselves up to be revenged on their enemies, bewildered him.

Having visited the young midshipman, who, fortunately, was not severely wounded, and seen to the comforts of the wounded, he was met by the surgeon, who said,

"The young woman has recovered her speech, and fancies she is dying. I do not think so. She asked me, in a faint, scarcely audible voice, were you alive? And on my saying 'yes, and scarcely hurt,' she clasped her hands, and, with wonderful energy, said, 'Oh! *Madonna!* let me see him before I die—at once; delay will be fatal.'"

"I will go at once," said Claudio Trepani. "Poor thing! she had a marvellous escape from the knife of her brutal assailant, and afterwards from the blowing up of the xebecque. How are the two men that were blown aboard?"

"One is dead," said the surgeon, "and the other will not live through the night. I think he is the young man you were speaking to, and who came up from the cabin of the xebecque."

"What!" exclaimed our hero, "Giorgio Manzani—no hope, do you say, of his recovery? Is he sensible?"

"Yes, he is perfectly sensible; and, to my disgust, uttered terrible maledictions when he understood you and the woman, whose shriek evidently caused this terrible catastrophe, were alive, and only slightly hurt; but you had better, sir, see this woman."

"I will go with you now," said Trepani, greatly shocked at what he had heard, following the surgeon into the small but neat cabin of the first mate, where he beheld Teresa—for she it was. She was slightly propped up, so as to speak with greater ease. She was fearfully pale, from loss of blood; but her dark eyes betrayed intense anxiety, as she looked up into the face of Claudio.

The last rays of the setting sun fell dimly through the sheet glass light, let into the deck, right upon the really fine features of the dying woman.

Captain Trepani sat down upon a chest, and in a few earnest words, expressed his hope that, after such a providential escape, her life would still be spared.

"Listen, Signor," said the woman, speaking with exceeding weakness and difficulty,

"there is no time to lose. The maiden you seek—the Signora Gonzalo—is now a prisoner on the Island of Melita."

She paused and closed her eyes, whilst Trepani, taking her cold clammy hand in his, said,

"Oh! bless you for this intelligence! she is then safe, for Giorgio Manzani, her persecutor, is now on board this vessel, mutilated and dying."

"No! no!" uttered the woman, in great excitement, and, evidently, either fainting or dying, for, grasping our hero's hand, she gasped out, "Beware! the villa on the island of Melita, is mined; so is the great cave. Oh! my child! my child! Oh! say that you will save it. You are deceived—Giorgio Manzani—"

She could not utter another word—blood

appeared bursting through the bandage on her throat, which the surgeon hastily removed, and called out for his assistant, whilst Claudio, greatly shocked, hurried on deck, to send assistance to the surgeon.

He paced the deck for several minutes, thinking over the strange and welcome intelligence Teresa had imparted. Though confused and incoherent, still, the knowledge that his beloved Marina was a prisoner on the little Island of Melita, with every rock, and precipice, and cave of the island familiar to his memory, having spent two or three years of his early boyhood on the island, in the villa built by his grandfather, and that island scarcely eight miles distant from him, filled his heart with gratitude, for intelligence so unexpectedly gained.

Teresa stated that the villa and caves were mined. From this sentence, imperfect as it was, he imagined that the chief resort of the sea robbers, of whom, it appeared, Giorgio Manzani, strange as it seemed, was the chief, was on the island, and that much of their plunder was stored in the singular caverns he knew existed there. The robbers would, no doubt, blow up the villa and the caverns, as they did the xebecque, when discovered. The rescue of Marina, thus required extreme caution.

Claudio Trepani was aware—indeed, few in Naples were ignorant—that secret societies and robber communities existed even in the city of Naples. The Caraeioli, for instance, were well known to be a marvellously organised community of robbers, levelling taxes

upon all trades, and using their daggers, often with impunity, before the very faces of the Neapolitan obviori.

It was not generally believed that the French, at the period of the revolution, had totally destroyed the detested and feared *Ladri di Mare*, for vessels still sailed from certain ports, and were no more heard of.

Captain Trepani felt satisfied that the great secret of the Signor Manzani's wealth was discovered, and that, no doubt, there were many apparently respectable, wealthy merchants, in most of the large sea ports, connected with this terrible traffic.

On the surgeon's return to the deck, he informed our hero that he still thought the woman would recover; but she must not be disturbed or allowed to speak for a day or two.

"You had better, sir, see the young man you say is Giorgio Manzani; he is dying. Still, he is sensible, and quite able to converse."

"I will see him now," said Trepani; and he followed the surgeon into the gun room, where Giorgio Manzani lay upon a mattress, writhing in pain, though everything was done to alleviate his sufferings.

Trepani could not but look with pity and commisseration, notwithstanding his cruel acts, upon the mutilated features of this misguided and unfortunate young man.

His face, excepting the eyes and mouth, was bound with bandages, soaked in oil; his two arms were broken, and his whole frame shook fearfully; his dark eyes were, nevertheless, bright and piercing in their expression, as they became fixed upon those of our hero.

It was already dark in the gun room; the only light falling on the sufferer's features was from two battle lanterns, swinging from a beam over his head.

"You are come, Claudio Trepani," said Giorgio Manzani, distinctly but bitterly, "to gaze upon my mutilated body, and to exult in my misery."

"You are greatly mistaken, Manzani," said the commander of the "Etna." "Everything has been done to assuage your pain; and I myself would do more, were it in my power; therefore, you wrong me. Though a sufferer myself from your acts, which have brought unmerited misfortune upon a noble family, I bear you no malice; but deeply lament that your own projects have resulted in your destruction."

"Curse that idiot, Fanelli, it was his act

has brought this suffering, which will only end with death, upon me. I would have played a surer game; but do not imagine I am going to die, whining like a beaten cur—no! no! Proud as you may be of this imaginary triumph, gained by the traitorous revelations of the woman Teresa, I tell you that you are completely deceived, betrayed, that the object you seek is already beyond your help or rescue, and with my last breath I curse and defy you."

A violent convulsion seized the sufferer, whose voice faltered as he pronounced the last words; with a frightful effort he rose, glared wildly at the two young men who strove to assist him, and then, with a deep sigh, fell back a corpse.

"Better dead than live in such suffering, and with such feelings in his breast," said our

hero, sensibly affected. "I never harmed or even spoke to him before. Such enmity, evinced with the last breath, is fearful to listen to. Neither can I understand his words; they leave me perplexed and mystified. However, we must get to this island of Melita; during the hours of the night perhaps the woman Teresa may recover sufficiently to give more explicit explanations."

Claudio Trepani explained to the surgeon, as well as he could, the events, otherwise to him most mysterious.

They proceeded on deck.

"But," said the surgeon, continuing the conversation, "if this woman belongs to this gang of sea robbers, how did she get off the island, and why does she seek to betray her associates? And how, *Corpo di Bacco!* did she fall into the hands of the xebecque's crew? for no doubt that ruffian who gashed

her throat with his knife did so to prevent her shrieks reaching your ears."

"Ah!" observed Trepani; "all that is as mysterious to me as to you; we must hope for explanations from the injured woman. It will, however, require great caution in landing on the island; a most vigilant watch no doubt is kept, and we can well imagine, by their desperate action of blowing up the xebecque to destroy us, that their associates on the island will not be backward in imitating their atrocious design if they discover us. I have a precious life to save—a captive in the villa built by my grandfather—and though every niche of the island is familiar to me, yet to get ashore without alarming the residents will be a difficulty."

"A serious undertaking," said the surgeon, thoughtfully.

"Yes," returned our hero; "the life to

be saved is more dear to me than my own."

When a boy, Trepani had lived on the island with his father's family for some time, to avoid a great pestilence that was raging in Naples and over the island of Sicily. Bold and high-spirited, he had explored every rock, and cave, and landing place on the island.

To merely anchor off the island might attract little or no attention, as vessels in calm weather frequently did so to avoid the strong currents carrying them in for the Sicilian shores; therefore he made up his mind to anchor off the north shore of the island, at all events.

CHAPTER XI.

Whilst the "Etna" was making for the island of Melita, those dwelling upon that little spot were in a state of suspense and fear. Phillipo Vanti and two others of the band of sea robbers were on that same night sitting in the kitchen of the villa, smoking and drinking, and at intervals talking. The woman Agnes had seen that Marina and her attendant had retired to rest some time; and

having closed all the doors, she sat down in the same room with the three men, but did not join in the conversation.

Vanti appeared exceedingly serious and depressed. There were eighteen men and five women and several children on the island, all associates in crime.

"You are sure, Vincentio," said Vanti, taking his pipe and knocking the ashes out of it, "that Beppo is to be trusted with a night watch to the north side. We are short-handed; I told our captain as much, but he said he would be back soon, and that there was no more danger to be apprehended now than at any other time. But you see the extraordinary disappearance of Teresa; her escape from the island, for no other purpose but to betray us, leaves us in such a state of anxiety that the arrival of the 'Massaniello,' or the

'St. Elmo,' only will relieve us. We must desert this island, and fix upon another place; we are no longer safe here."

"No, St. Nicholas, it's far from safe," returned Vanti's comrade, "since that jade took to flight. I always told you she was brooding over the shooting of her husband; she vowed deadly vengeance against our captain, and upon you now will fall the penalty of her escape. Our captain will spare none; the woman was under your charge, and she's gone—by our laws and sworn vows you are liable to be condemned and shot."

"I know that," returned Vanti, quite calmly; "neither do I want to shirk our laws or my oath. But I tell you what, comrades," and he looked his associates steadily in the face, "it's my firm belief we shall never see the 'Massaniello' or our captain again."

"*Corpo di Demiono*!" exclaimed the two men; "what makes you say that, eh?"

"Because I dreamt three nights running, after the escape of Teresa, that I saw the 'Massaniello' approaching this island under full sail, the sky clear, and the water smooth; as I looked at her, I saw her suddenly raised up from the sea, and disappear, as if in a mist. I thought nothing of this the first night; but when I dreamed the same identical dream the two following nights, it staggered me."

"*Corpo di Bacco*!" returned his comrade; "it was strange—dreams are queer things. Did you look in the dream-book to see what number it was, and what interpretation is given, to have a go in the lottery at Naples?"

"Blessed *Madonna*!" exclaimed the woman, starting and dropping her knitting. "I had

a strange dream last night. I saw Teresa as plain as I see you here; and where do you think I saw her ?"

"*Sacristie!* who can say?" returned the men. "Not here, I'll swear."

"But it was, though," returned the woman. "I saw four strange men carrying her on a mattress up the avenue, bring her in at the the front door, and into the hall; her face was as white as a sheet, and she kept calling out, 'My child, my child; you have destroyed my child, as you murdered its father!' "

"To the *Diabolo* with your dreams," said Vanti, rising, and giving himself a shake. "We are like three old crones; let us to our posts."

As he said the words a peculiar whistle was heard without the door, and then some one knocked.

"Let him in, Agnes," said Vanti; "it's one of the watch—there's something in the wind now, not right."

The woman drew back the bolts, and a tall, strong-built man, armed to the teeth, with pistols, dagger, and carbine, entered the kitchen.

"Oh, it's you, Beppo! What has taken you from your post?"

"I have left two comrades to replace me," answered the man, seating himself; and taking up the pitcher, that contained some wine, he took a draught.

"Well, what's the matter?" said Vanti; "any signs of the 'Massaniello,' or the 'St. Elmo?'"

"No," returned the man; "but there's a very suspicious looking craft just anchored off the north shore."

"*Madonna* !" muttered the woman, as she fussed about, putting away one thing or another, preparatory to leaving the house, "they surely don't mean to blow the young girl and her attendant up along with our enemies. I see no good in that," this she said aloud, as she extinguished the light, and left the villa, leaving Marina and her attendant the sole inmates.

As the door closed upon the woman Agnes, Marina Gonzalo's servant came from the closet, where she had stationed herself, and where she had overheard all the conversation carried on between the parties in the kitchen.

Marina had not retired to rest, but was sitting reading in her chamber. On looking up she was startled by the exceeding pallor of her attendant and her scared and frightened look.

"Oh! Signora," the girl exclaimed, clasping her hands, and sinking into a chair, "it's come to what I trembled to think of. We are to be blown up at once."

"Nonsense, Anna," said Marina, calmly, "how can you imagine that men could commit such an atrocity as to blow up two helpless females. As I told you before, we can go out of the house, if—"

"Then we must do so at once, Signora," said the girl anxiously, "for there is a strange vessel or steamer come to land troops to destroy these brigands. Teresa has, I am sure, sent them, and everything is ready, and a train of gunpowder laid to fire the gunpowder in the cellars, and the moment the enemy enters the villa, a man named Beppo is to fire the train," and then the young girl informed

a glass one; lighting the wick in the glass one, they proceeded to the passage; the key was in the door; unlocking it, they traversed a narrow passage till stopped by a strongly plated door; in this was a massive key, which took their united strength to turn by putting a piece of iron in the handle. Some ten or or more stone steps led into a spacious cellar, as well as our heroine could judge. There were several ranges of wine casks and bins full of bottles—wine or spirits—but nothing like powder, but the light falling on a door at the far end, Marina pushed it open, and then the combustibles intended to blow up the villa, were plainly visible. Four barrels of powder, their heads knocked off, stood side by side.

"Ah! *Madre mia*!" exclaimed Anna; "the wretches! it is true enough—that's powder."

Holding the lantern at a careful distance, Marina and her attendant observed a train of powder, communicating with the casks, laid thickly along the floor of this cellar to a bricked hole a foot square, which ran no doubt under ground into some out-house. Holding the light, protected by its glass sides to the hole, they saw the powder spread thickly through it.

"Now," said Marina, to her scared attendant, "we can easily defeat these villains, go back to the kitchen, and bring a bucket of water and a jug. Do not lose time."

"*Madonna*! and leave you here in the dark, Signora?"

"Oh! the dark will make no difference to me, but pray do not delay, as the woman Agnes may return."

Anna, by no means tranquil, returned with

She recognised the voice, though through the slight opening of the dark lantern a stream of light issued, the man holding it was scarcely visible.

"Giorgio Manzani!" exclaimed the amazed Marina. The next moment a thick mantle was thrown over her head, drawn tight, and then thrusting the pistol into his breast, the man lifted her in his arms and passed out through a low door in the further end of the vault; this led into a subterraneous passage about fifty paces in extent, and ending in a low arch opening into an out-house.

"Is the train all right," said a low voice, as Giorgio Manzani emerged from the vault, "if so, it is time to fire the mine, sixteen of our enemies are entering the villa."

"Then light the fusee, and follow me to the boat. Not a word."

Giorgio Manzani hurried on through the

thick shrubbery, whilst Beppo, stooping applied a light to a prepared fuse, which was intended to burn two or three minutes at least, but to his intense horror the train exploded at once. Beppo rushed like a maniac from the out-house and through the shrubbery, expecting the villa to be blown into the air. No explosion followed, but lights flashed from every window of the villa, and loud voices might be heard without the walls, shouting to some one in the distance. Beppo rushed on cursing his ill-luck, and rejoined his captain, who was crushing his way through a dense laurel and myrtle coppice.

"Villain!" exclaimed Giorgio Manzani, "you have not fired the train."

Swearing a terrible oath, Beppo vowed he had, and that the powder exploded instantly, but ended in nothing.

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she gazed up into the blood stained face of her lover. In the struggle with his enemy he had received the blow of the pistol butt on his forehead, and the blood flowed freely from the cut.

The men who had fired the muskets were some of the crew of the "Etna."

The sea robbers were everywhere subdued, several killed, and four or five prisoners; all escape from the island being prevented by the seizing of their boats.

Trepani, ordering the body of Manzani to be carried to the villa by some of his men, whilst others who joined them pursued the three men still at liberty on the island; he also peremptorily directed that none of the females or children should be in any way molested.

Supporting the now happy Marina on his arm, they proceeded by a more circuitous road to the Villa.

"I owe my life to you, my beloved," said Trepani, pressing the little hand resting on his arm. "My foot treading on a round stone, turned my ankle and threw me off my guard; the next moment I should have been Manzani's victim, but for your devotion."

"Ah! dear Claudio, when will the recollection of that horrible moment leave my memory? But how came you to be so fortunately on the spot to rescue me from that misguided and ill-fated young man?"

"My dearest Marina, I am so bewildered by the events of the last few days, that I scarcely can credit my senses. You will think me insane, when I tell you that within

the last twenty hours I have seen two Giorgio Manzanis die before my eyes!"

"Oh! *Madonna!* what can you mean, dear Claudio?" questioned Marina, with a start.

"We are now close to the villa, dearest, and the explanation of my words is too tedious to briefly enable you to comprehend their meaning. I assure you, when first my gaze rested on the face of the man who carried you in his arms, I was staggered; for I firmly believed Giorgio Manzani dead, having seen him, as I supposed, expire from his wounds ten hours previously on the deck of the 'Etna,' and yet there he stood, alive. I can only solve the mystery by supposing he had a twin brother; but here we are, and some of my crew, with lights, coming to meet us."

CHAPTER XII.

The following day, the Count Gonzalo, his attendant, and Teresa, were landed, and all comfortably accommodated in the villa, the contents of the cellar cleared out, and the male prisoners sent on board the "Etna," which sailed in the evening for Marsala, under charge of the master, to be transferred to the service of Garibaldi.

Trepani resolved to follow in a few days, and place himself and ship under the General's

"Ah!" exclaimed Manzani, with a fierce execration, "I recollect I found our prisoner in the wine cellar, she must have seen the train and swept it away before I seized h r All this is a mystery. Vanti has paid the forfeit with his life, for letting Teresa escape. We must be quick, for our enemies will spread all over the island and exchange signals with the brig, our boat must be sunk as soon as we reach the St. Elmo."

"But where can the 'Massaniello' be," exclaimed Beppo.

"Hush! I hear voices," said Giorgio Manzani, quickening his steps, and getting clear of the myrtle grove. As he stepped forth into the light, for the thick grove was intensely obscure, a strong hand grapsed his arm, and before he could turn, the insensible form of Marina was torn from his grasp.

With a terrible imprecation, Manzani drew his revolver from his breast and faced the rescuer of Marina; as he did so, the moon's rays, just breaking through a dense cloud, fell upon his features. Claudio Trepani—for he it was—fell back, uttering an exclamation of profound amazement, exclaiming,

"Impossible! and yet I do behold Giorgio Manzani, and alive."

With a shout of rage, Giorgio Manzani rushed upon him to regain his prize, not liking to fire his revolver, with the form of Marina lying across his chest.

Beppo had fled, but our hero instantly recovered himself, struck down Manzani's grasp, and with his right hand, seized him by the throat, exclaiming,

"This is flesh and blood, at all events," and laying Marina down, those two strong,

powerful men grasped each other in a struggle for life and death; the pistol fired by Manzani, full in Trepani's face, flashed in the pan, and then it was torn from his grasp.

Nearly the same age, and nearly equal in power, the struggle for mastery became a fierce one. Marina was rapidly recovering, and shouts and cries resounded at a short distance, as if from men in pursuit, and now and then a pistol and musket shot fell upon the ear. Marina sat up, casting back the long tresses of her hair, which, broken loose, hung disordered over her face and person; for a moment she felt bewildered, but the strong moonlight fell upon the startling scene before her, and in an instant she comprehended all; she beheld her lover stumble and stagger, then Giorgio Manzani, with a

shout of exultation, dashed him at his feet, and drawing his poignard, exclaimed,

"I triumph even now; die, and take with you my curse."

At that moment, the arms of Marina encircled his neck and drew him back, and the deadly blow fell harmless, whilst Claudio Trepani sprang upon his feet and grasped the hand that held the poignard. There was a crash through the trees, three men dashed past, and several musket shots were fired; one of the balls struck Giorgio Manzani. His grasp of his enemy relaxed; the next instant he fell dead at the feet of Marina.

Claudio Trepani threw his arm round the form of the trembling and half-fainting maiden, who uttered a prayer of thankfulness when her enemy fell, but became alarmed as

she gazed up into the blood stained face of her lover. In the struggle with his enemy he had received the blow of the pistol butt on his forehead, and the blood flowed freely from the cut.

The men who had fired the muskets were some of the crew of the "Etna."

The sea robbers were everywhere subdued, several killed, and four or five prisoners; all escape from the island being prevented by the seizing of their boats.

Trepani, ordering the body of Manzani to be carried to the villa by some of his men, whilst others who joined them pursued the three men still at liberty on the island; he also peremptorily directed that none of the females or children should be in any way molested.

Supporting the now happy Marina on his arm, they proceeded by a more circuitous road to the Villa.

"I owe my life to you, my beloved," said Trepani, pressing the little hand resting on his arm. "My foot treading on a round stone, turned my ankle and threw me off my guard; the next moment I should have been Manzani's victim, but for your devotion."

"Ah! dear Claudio, when will the recollection of that horrible moment leave my memory? But how came you to be so fortunately on the spot to rescue me from that misguided and ill-fated young man?"

"My dearest Marina, I am so bewildered by the events of the last few days, that I scarcely can credit my senses. You will think me insane, when I tell you that within

the last twenty hours I have seen two Giorgio Manzanis die before my eyes!"

"Oh! *Madonna!* what can you mean, dear Claudio?" questioned Marina, with a start.

"We are now close to the villa, dearest, and the explanation of my words is too tedious to briefly enable you to comprehend their meaning. I assure you, when first my gaze rested on the face of the man who carried you in his arms, I was staggered; for I firmly believed Giorgio Manzani dead, having seen him, as I supposed, expire from his wounds ten hours previously on the deck of the 'Etna,' and yet there he stood, alive. I can only solve the mystery by supposing he had a twin brother; but here we are, and some of my crew, with lights, coming to meet us."

CHAPTER XII.

The following day, the Count Gonzalo, his attendant, and Teresa, were landed, and all comfortably accommodated in the villa, the contents of the cellar cleared out, and the male prisoners sent on board the "Etna," which sailed in the evening for Marsala, under charge of the master, to be transferred to the service of Garibaldi.

Trepani resolved to follow in a few days, and place himself and ship under the General's

orders. As yet, Claudio was ignorant how affairs were going on in Sicily and on the Neapolitan shores.

The third or fourth day, Teresa was sufficiently recovered to explain a great deal of the mystery that enveloped the past. Her child was found safe and well, and restored to her; the wives of the sea robbers were embarked in one of the large boats, and were, at their own request, landed on the Sicilian coast, and left to follow the bent of their inclinations. The boat returned with a supply of various kinds of provisions, and the news that Palermo was in the possession of Garibaldi, and that an expedition was ready for landing on the Neapolitan coast, with the prospect of successfully driving the young King from his ill-governed kingdoms.

Giorgio Manzani and his twin brother—for

such was their relationship—were buried along with the robbers who fell in the contest that took place on landing; by an unexpected accident, they failed in blowing up the cave, with its enormously valuable contents, which thus fell into Trepani's custody. Fifteen of the crew of the "Etna" remained to guard the island, in case an attack should be made by any roving vessel belonging to the association, and two pieces of cannon were mounted in a good position to defend the landing place.

The Count Gonzalo and Marina became extremely anxious to learn some tidings of the Countess her son and daughter, and Claudio of his sister. As soon as the Count recovered sufficient strength, he intended proceeding to Palermo, to which city our hero also resolved to go, being anxious to join Garibaldi in his

expedition to Naples. From Teresa he learned the following particulars :—

Teresa was aware, having heard it related by her husband, who was cruelly shot dead by Giorgio Manzani himself, as recorded in the opening chapter of this tale—and chiefly on the testimony and the statements of the man Vanti, who coveted Teresa for a wife—Giorgio and Alberto Manzani were twin brothers, but the secret of their mother having twin sons was carefully kept secret and all but the family considered Giorgio Manzani as the only child born. Alberto was taken away, and reared in Palermo by his uncle. As the twins grew in years, their extraordinary resemblance in figure and features was striking; in fact, when attired alike, they were not to be distinguished one from the other. Sometimes Giorgio Manzani would

reside in Palermo as Alberto, whilst Alberto visited Naples as Giorgio.

It was the aim of both brothers to gain possession of Marina Gonzalo, but Giorgio tried to outwit Alberto, and both fell victims to the same cause. It is most probable that the discovery of this nest of depredators would have remained, perhaps, many years unknown, or finally have broken up or divided their spoils, but for the brothers' pursuit of Marina.

Giorgio Manzani frequently commanded the "Massaniello;" Alberto, the "St. Elmo." It was their father's earnest wish to dissolve the association. They had wealth enough; why risk it, and their lives? but the brothers loved the life of excitement and the mystery attached to their wild and adventurous life,

and the strange events brought about by their singular resemblance.

Teresa, who abhorred the life her husband led, had, by tears and entreaties, won upon him to desert that horrible life; and he himself, not liking the cruelties practised by his comrades, agreed; to do so was difficult, and the penalty, if discovered—death.

In clambering over the rocks on the east side of the island, Teresa's husband discovered a cave, unknown to any of his associates on the island. The sea flowed into it. Stripping off his garments he swam in, and at the extremity found a sandy beach, and the cave extending considerably further; but what surprised him was the discovery of an ancient boat, some fifteen feet in length, and, strange to say, but little decayed. It was too dark to examine

further, but returning again with a light another day, he examined the place. The boat was a miniature Roman galley, the timbers mostly gone, but the bottom still sea-worthy. The remains of rotten sails, oars, and various other articles were lying about the cave, and on further search he found the skeleton bones of two human beings. It struck him instantly that this old boat might be made sufficiently serviceable to cross from the island to the coast of Sicily. He, therefore, at various times, secretly repaired it; the distance to go was only eight miles. This short voyage could be traversed in the dark hours of the night. Just as everything was prepared for flight, and all his stock of plunder stowed in the cave, he was betrayed by Vanti, and shot by Giorgio Manzani.

Teresa vowed vengeance; she resolved to

betray the whole band; the difficulty was to elude the vigilance of her intended second husband, that was to be, and to carry off her child with her. In this she was baffled for some time, till the arrival of Marina gave her greater facility for carrying out her projects.

There being no tides in the Mediterranean, she had to swim to reach the interior of the cave, but this she could do, and convey some garments there, so that she could change. To bring her child was impossible; to leave her on the rocks till she got the boat out might lead to discovery by her cries. Waiting for an intensely dark night, she left her cabin and her child sleeping, reached the cave, and contrived to push the boat into the water. At this time it was calm, and the sea smooth; she knew the direction she would have to row,

but she had nothing to guide her in so dark a night.

After an hour a strong breeze sprung up right from the Sicilian shores, which mocked her efforts to resist it. It rapidly increased to half a gale, and the crazy boat of a past age leaked like a sieve; still she hoped to be picked up by some passing vessel. When morning dawned, she was some fifteen miles from the little Island of Melita, and above twenty from the Island of Sicily. Towards midday she observed a large xebecque tacking, and approaching her. When it came nearer, with a cry of despair, she recognised the "Massaniello." In a few minutes the xebecque ran against the frail boat and sunk it; but the crew recognised Teresa, and saved her, dragging her aboard half drowned.

The rage of Alberto Manzani—for the

brothers had changed vessels, for certain reasons—was great on discovering Teresa, as he at once knew she was escaping from the island to betray them. When chased by the "Etna," he ordered her to be gagged, and placed a man in charge of her, with instructions, should they be boarded by the crew of the "Etna," and she attempted to remove the gag, to kill her, without any hesitation. Teresa was of opinion that the "Massaniello" was accidentally blown up, for she heard the master say it was unfortunate they had the gunpowder on board, and as it was not in their bills of lading, if searched, it would create suspicion. Whether in a fit of rage, or from a desire of vengeance, knowing that there was no chance of escaping an ignominious death, the *padrone* fired his pistol into the powder, destroying himself and associates, in the hopes of crushing his enemies at the same time.

Giorgio Manzani was approaching the island at the same period, in the "St. Elmo," not at all aware that the "Massaniello" would be on her way to the island for at least four days later. As they approached the island, owing to the dead calm, they could not make the usual landing place; and, as Giorgio Manzani pulled ashore in the long boat of the "St. Elmo," they perceived the "Etna" at anchor. Suspecting something, for they recognised the gun boat at once, they pulled for another landing place, and succeeded in getting to the villa before Claudio Trepani and his party, and carrying off Marina; they also thought to blow the villa up, but, as we already know, that project failed through the forethought of Marina.

Still Giorgio Manzani would undoubtedly have succeeded in carrying Marina to his

boat, had not Trepani thought of making a circuit of the myrtle grove, whilst his men went the other way; taking two men with him, he passed round the grove so as to intercept any one from the villa making for the eastern landing place. In the momentary gloom caused by a dark mass of clouds obscuring the moon, he lost his men in the intricacies of the wood, and fortunately stumbled upon Giorgio Manzani, with Marina in his arms.

Our tale might end here, as far as any further adventures of our hero or heroine are concerned, for nothing of moment occurred to disturb the happiness of their re-union. After a fortnight's residence on the island, the "Etna," fully repaired and in excellent trim, came for them, bringing with the intelligence that Garibaldi was everywhere

successful. Palermo was in a state of frantic joy, for Garibaldi and his followers were preparing for the expedition to Naples, and the "Etna" was wanted for the conveyance of his brave followers to the mainland. Accordingly they embarked and sailed for Palermo; there the Count took up his abode, with his daughter, despatching a message to Naples, to inquire after his Countess and his son and other daughter.

Claudio Trepani was of great service to Garibaldi with the "Etna," which afterwards joined the Neapolitan fleet, when placed under the command of Admiral Persani. After the fall of Gaëta, and the final settlement of the kingdom of Naples under Piedmont, Captain Trepani returned to Naples, where Count Gonzalo and his family had already arrived and settled down quietly in their old

mansion, having, with considerable difficulty, recovered a part of his unjustly confiscated property. His constitution had received so severe a shock by his imprisonment in the prison of Ischia, that considerable more time would be required to restore him to his former vigour than he thought.

During the tumults and unsettled state of Naples, previous to the flight of the King, it getting circulated through the *lazzaroni* and the mob of Naples that the Signor Manzani had attained his great wealth by association with a community of sea robbers, or *Ladri de Mare*, his houses were attacked and plundered. He, however, contrived to escape out of the kingdom with his wife and daughter, and no one, when the troubles ceased, ever heard more of him.

The accumulated stores found in the caves

on the island of Melita, were seized by the Government, and as no owner could be discovered, all were confiscated to the State.

Trepani, after his marriage to his beloved Marina, was appointed to the command of a fine frigate, and the island of Melita restored to him; but the great property and title possessed by his father, and unjustly confiscated, he had no chance of recovering. Blessed with the hand of his beloved Marina, he troubled little for that which he never possessed. His brother-in-law, Lieutenant Gonzalo succeeded him in the command of the "Etna."

Shortly after Captain Trepani's marriage, the old Countess de Manfredi died, and left the whole of her large property to Ida Trepani, who immediately declared she would never marry, and that whatever property she

possessed should be settled on the offspring of her brother, with whom and his happy bride she took up her abode. Teresa and her child were placed above want through the generosity of Trepani.

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